WAGNER'S SIEGFRIED

as retold by Oliver Huckel

STATE LIBRARY
SALEM, OREGON
THE UNION

DISCARD

SIEGFRIED: BY WAGNER
RETOLD BY OLIVER HUCKEL

BOOKS BY DR. HUCKEL

MENTAL MEDICINE
Some practical suggestions from a spiritual standpoint
(Cloth, $1.00 net)

THE MELODY OF GOD'S LOVE
An interpretation of the Twenty-Third Psalm
(Cloth, 75 cents net)

WAGNER'S MUSIC DRAMAS
Retold in English Verse

PARSIFAL	RHINE-GOLD
TANNHÄUSER	WALKÜRE
LOHENGRIN	SIEGFRIED

(Each, cloth, 75 cents net)

THOMAS Y. CROWELL & CO.

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025

https://archive.org/details/bwb_W9-CSA-402

SIEGFRIED SLAYS THE DRAGON

Siegfried

A · DRAMATIC · POEM · BY · RICHARD WAGNER · FREELY · TRANSLATED · IN POETIC · NARRATIVE · FORM · BY

Oliver · Huckel

Pierce Library
Eastern Oregon University
1410 L Avenue
La Grande, OR 97850
WITHDRAWN

Thomas · Y · Crowell · & · Co ·
PUBLISHERS · NEW · YORK

Copyright, 1910, by Thomas Y. Crowell & Co.

Published September, 1910

Composition and electrotype plates by
D. B. Updike, The Merrymount Press, Boston

CONTENTS

FOREWORD Page ix

PART I
The Sword is Forged 3

PART II
The Dragon is Slain 45

PART III
The Bride is Won 79

ILLUSTRATIONS

Siegfried Slays the Dragon	Frontispiece
Siegfried Forging the Sword	Facing page 34
Siegfried and Mime	72
Brunnhilda Awakened by Siegfried	98

FOREWORD

THERE is something primitive, colossal, majestic in Wagner's fourfold music drama of The Nibelungen Ring. It partakes of the power and grandeur of the earlier ages of the world. It is a drama of the mighty era of the gods, the giants, and the heroes before the coming of man upon the earth. It is the wondrous story in which was enwrapped much of the religious belief of our ancient Northern ancestors in Europe.

The deepest truths of this drama of primitive life are universal, and their meanings as potent to-day as in the prehistoric world. It is a vast allegory of the strongest passions of life. It is a dream of yesterday and a vision of to-morrow, if we have eyes to look into the heart of its mystery.

It is the aim of this present translation and interpretation to present the story of The Ring in the clear and strong way of the German original, to show the relation of the parts and the dramatic unity of the whole, to make the whole vast epic stand out in its own vivid light and thrilling power.

The usual English librettos of The Ring are totally inadequate and confusing as translations of Wagner's text. They are made to suit the musical requirements rather than to present the thought in literary form. It is often a perplexing task rather than a pleasure to read them. Tenfold more involved and obscure than Browning, they have none of his redeeming grace of thought or speech.

Fore-word

The present translation aims to be faithful to Wagner's text, and at the same time clear in thought, poetic in imagery, rhythmic in expression. It endeavors to transfuse into English the very spirit of Wagner's lofty thought.

It will be remembered that Wagner wrote The Nibelungen Ring, first of all, merely as a poem, and so it was originally published. The music was not composed until a later period. Some parts of the published poem he did not use for the music, and they are not given in the librettos, — for instance, Brunnhilda's splendid farewell words in The Dusk of the Gods, — but we have used them in this translation as being a real part of the poem, and as a fine inspiration for the interpretation of the fullest thought of the drama.

The Nibelungen Ring, as Wagner gives it, is divided into four dramas, — The Rhine-Gold, The Valkyrie, Siegfried, and The Dusk of the Gods. These are a tetralogy, a cycle of four great music dramas, or, as it is sometimes designated, a trilogy, considering The Rhine-Gold as a prelude to the greater story of The Valkyrie, Siegfried, and The Dusk of the Gods.

In these introductory words we may find it helpful toward a clear understanding to consider the four dramas as one great epic whole, — for such they are, — and to study the sources of the story, the story itself, and finally its spiritual and universal significance. In doing this each one of the dramas will be studied in some detail, the special features noted, the unusual references explained, and the dramatic scope

and purpose considered. Wagner's part in the remarkable welding into unity will then be clearly seen.

I

As to the sources, we may remember that The Ring, as we have it in Wagner's dramas, is not taken from the ancient Nibelungen Lied, to which it bears some resemblance, but it is an independent composition. It was derived by Wagner from various ancient songs and sagas, composed by many old bards, and Wagner wove it into one great harmonious story. Its main features, and also innumerable details, are from the old Norse and German myths, but there has been selection and rearrangement of the material. The principal source of The Ring was the Volsunga Saga, a Scandinavian epic, preserved in the Icelandic literature. Lesser parts of the story are taken from the Elder Edda and the Younger Edda, old Norse sagas. Other parts are taken from the Nibelungen Lied, the Eckenlied, and other Teutonic folklore.

The great drama, as Wagner finally evolved it, is wonderfully true to the ancient spirit, and gives a splendid glimpse into the earlier mythology and legends of the Northern peoples. In the drama of The Ring there is portrayed a primitive existence in the world, and at first there are only four distinct races, — the gods, the giants, the dwarfs, the nymphs. Later, by a special creation, there come two other races, — the valkyrie and the heroes. As to the characterization of these races, we may note that

the gods are the noblest and highest race, and dwell first in the mountain meadows, later in the palace of Valhalla on the heights. The giants are a great and strong race, but lack wisdom; they hate what is noble, and are enemies of the gods; they dwell in caves near the earth's surface. The dwarfs, or nibelungs, are black, uncouth pigmies, hating the good, hating the gods; they are crafty and cunning, and dwell in the bowels of the earth. The nymphs are pure, innocent creatures of the water. The valkyrie are daughters of the gods, but mingled with a mortal strain; they gather dead heroes from the battle-fields and carry them to Valhalla. The heroes are children of the gods, but also mingled with a mortal strain; they are destined to become at last the highest race of all, and to succeed the gods in the government of the world.

The principal gods are Wotan, the first of the gods; Loki, the god of fire; Donner, the god of thunder; Froh, the god of joy. The goddesses are Fricka, wife of Wotan and goddess of marriage; Freya, the goddess of love; Erda, the goddess of earth. The chief giants are Fafner and Fasolt, brothers. The chief dwarfs are Alberich and Mime, brothers, and later Hagan, son of Alberich. The chief nymphs are the Rhine-daughters, Flosshilda, Woglinda, and Wellgunda. There are nine Valkyrie, of whom Brunnhilda is the leading one. The most important relationship to remember is that of Brunnhilda and Siegfried. Brunnhilda is the daughter of Wotan and Erda. Siegfried is the son

of Siegmund and Sieglinda, both of whom are children of Wotan by a mortal woman. The drama culminates with the slaying of Siegfried and the sacrificial death of Brunnhilda.

There are many magical elements in the drama of The Ring, such as the ring itself, which endows its owner with supernatural power and ensures the obedience of others to his commands; the tarnhelm, or wishing-cap, which enables its owner to become invisible, or to assume any form he pleases; the sword, which has magic power, given by Wotan; the golden apples that grow in the garden of the goddess Freya, and impart eternal youth to all who eat them; the draught of oblivion, which effaces memory; the draught of memory, which restores it; the bird which speaks to Siegfried and leads him; the dragon into which Fafner transforms himself; the dragon's blood, which enables Siegfried to understand the language of birds; the fire which springs up around the sleeping Brunnhilda at the command of the fire-god Loki. It is well to have these relations and symbols clearly in mind in reading the successive parts of the drama. It will be a blazed path through the mazes and intricacies of the forest.

II

Those who wish to study the differences in the legends of the Nibelungen Lied and the Nibelungen Ring, and the way in which Wagner used his ancient material, are referred to Professor W. C. Sawyer's book on Teutonic Legends

in the Nibelungen Lied and the Nibelungen Ring, where the matter is treated in full detail. For a very thorough and clear analysis of The Ring as Wagner gives it, with a study of the musical motifs, probably nothing is better for general readers than the volume The Epic of Sounds, by Freda Winworth. The more scholarly work of Professor Lavignac is indispensable for the student of Wagner's dramas. There is much illuminating comment on the sources and materials in Legends of the Wagner Drama by J. L. Weston. One of the best literary appreciations of the ancient legends is the essay by Thomas Carlyle, under the title of the Nibelungen Ring. That stern old prophet and wonderful prose-poet was a lover of German literature and especially of this great drama of The Ring.

As to the argument of the story, it will also be best to get that clearly in mind as a whole before going into the details of the various parts. It will save much confusion.

In brief the whole story of The Ring is this: The Rhine-Gold tells how a hoard of gold exists in the depths of the Rhine, guarded by the innocent Rhine-maidens. Alberich, a dwarf, forswears love to gain this gold. He makes it into a magic ring. It gives him all power. He gathers by it a hoard of treasures. Meanwhile Wotan, chief of the gods, has engaged the giants to build for him a noble castle, Valhalla, from whence to rule the world. They build it and come for payment. He had promised to give to them Freya, goddess of youth and love. But now the gods find they cannot spare Freya, up-

on whom they depend for their immortal youth. Loki, the god of fire and god of cunning craft as well, must provide some substitute. He tells of Alberich's magic ring and other treasure. The giants agree to take this. Wotan goes with Loki, and they steal it from Alberich, who curses them and lays the curse upon all who shall henceforth possess it. On compulsion they give the magic ring and the treasures to the giants as a substitute for Freya. The curse begins. Fafner kills his brother to get all, and transforms himself into a dragon to guard the treasures and the ring. The gods enter Valhalla over the rainbow bridge.

The second part of the drama, called the Valkyrie, relates how Wotan still covets the ring. He cannot take it himself, for he has given his word to the giants. He stands or falls by his word. So he devises an artifice to get the ring. He will get a hero-race to work for him and recover the ring and the treasures. Siegmund and Sieglinda are twin children of this new race. Sieglinda is carried off as a child and is forced into marriage with Hunding. Siegmund comes, and unknowingly breaks the law of marriage, but wins Nothung, the great sword, and a bride. Brunnhilda, chief of the Valkyrie, is commissioned by Wotan at the instance of Fricka, goddess of marriage, to slay him for his sin. She disobeys and tries to save him, but Hunding, helped by Wotan, slays him. Sieglinda, however, about to bear the free hero, to be called Siegfried, is saved by Brunnhilda, and hid in the forest. Brunnhilda herself is punished by

being made a mortal woman. She is left sleeping on the mountains with a wall of fire around her which only a hero can penetrate.

The drama continues. The story of Siegfried opens with a scene in the smithy between Mime the dwarf and Siegfried. Mime is welding a sword, and Siegfried scorns him. Mime tells him something of his mother, Sieglinda, and shows him the broken pieces of his father's sword. Wotan comes and tells Mime that only one who has no fear can remake the sword. Now Siegfried knows no fear and soon remakes the sword Nothung. Wotan and Alberich come to where the dragon Fafner is guarding the ring. They both long for it, but neither can take it. Soon Mime comes bringing Siegfried with the mighty sword. Fafner comes out, but Siegfried slays him. Happening to touch his lips with the dragon's blood, he understands the language of the birds. They tell him of the ring. He goes and gets it. Siegfried now has possession of the ring, but it is to bring him nothing of happiness, only evil. It is to curse love and finally bring death. The birds also tell him of Mime's treachery. He slays Mime. He longs for some one to love. The birds tell him of the slumbering Brunnhilda. A little bird leads him on the way. Wotan, who has taken last counsel of Erda, opposes him and tests him, but sees that he is the true hero at last. Siegfried finds Brunnhilda, loves her, awakens her; she in bewilderment and joy gives herself to him, and the supreme lovers of the world find love's victory and love's ecstasy.

The Dusk of the Gods portrays at the opening the three norns or fates weaving and measuring the thread of destiny. It is the beginning of the end. The perfect pair, Siegfried and Brunnhilda, appear in all the glory of their life, splendid ideals of manhood and womanhood. But Siegfried goes out into the world to achieve deeds of prowess. He gives her the Nibelungen ring to keep as a pledge of his love till his return. Meanwhile Alberich also has begotten a son, Hagan, to achieve for him the possession of the ring. He is partly of the Gibichung race, and works through Gunther and Gutrune, half-brother and half-sister to him. They beguile Siegfried to them, give him a magic draught which makes him forget Brunnhilda and fall in love with Gutrune. Under this same spell, he offers to bring Brunnhilda for wife to Gunther. Now is Valhalla full of sorrow and despair. The gods fear the end. Wotan murmurs, "O that she would give back the ring to the Rhine." But Brunnhilda will not give it up,—it is now her pledge of love. Siegfried comes, takes the ring, and Brunnhilda is now brought to the Rhine castle of the Gibichungs, but Siegfried under the spell does not love her. She is to be wedded to Gunther. She rises in wrath and denounces Siegfried. But at a hunting banquet Siegfried is given another magic draught, remembers all, and is slain by Hagan by a blow in the back, as he calls on Brunnhilda's name in love. Then comes the end. The body of Siegfried is burned on a funeral pyre, a grand funeral march is heard, and Brunnhilda rides into the flames

and sacrifices herself for love's sake; the ring goes back to the Rhine-daughters; and the old world — of the gods and Valhalla, of passion and sin — is burnt up with flames, for the gods have broken moral law, and coveted power rather than love, gold rather than truth, and therefore must perish. They pass, and a new era, the reign of love and truth, has begun.

III

And now looking at the real significance of the drama, we may take The Nibelungen Ring in one of three ways. We may consider it merely as a retelling in splendid form of some of the greatest of the ancient legends of the Norse mythology. It then becomes a national epic of the Northern peoples, as the Iliad and Odyssey were the great epics of the Southern peoples. It is a great story, such as the childhood of the race loves. It is a mighty picture, or series of pictures, full of beauty, passion, pathos, tragedy, majesty. It has no hidden meanings. It is just a world-old legend that grew up in the poetic imagination of the people, or a legend cyclus that developed around some ancient historic events.

Or we may take it as an ancient story rearranged by Richard Wagner to teach social and political lessons. In this view it is a great allegory of the political life of Europe in Wagner's day. It is a socialistic pamphlet, written in splendid poetic imagery. Such is Mr. Bernard Shaw's interpretation, in his book called The

Perfect Wagnerite. We may remember in this connection that Wagner was political revolutionist and socialistic philosopher, as well as poet and musician. Foreword

This view that The Ring is a drama of modern labor gives it an intensely vivid and contemporaneous interest. Against the background of the gods the mighty play is worked out, — the tyranny of capital, the swarming masses of the working-people, and the great ethical principles involved in the struggle are wonderfully shown. Here are some of the keynotes of the drama in lines here and there. See how modern they sound! "When you pant for power, little can your hard hearts know of holiness;" that is, love of money often smothers the soul. "To get power ye will trample in lawless contempt love and a woman's worth;" that is, all ideals, all love, is forsworn for gold. Again: "When to a ring this gold is fashioned, it grasps and holds the world;" that is, the ring is organized wealth, great corporations. "This tarnhelm makes invisible;" a board of directors is impersonal, irresponsible, invisible, — the corporation is soulless. "Unto him ye are slaves, ye must cringe and serve;" so gold speaks to the swarms of workers. "Lazy hounds, heap up my wealth, dig out my metal, melt it into bars!" so speaks a modern master of the mines, steel, copper, or coal. "Tremble in terror, O slaves, heed his rule who holds the ring!" that is, gold is king. But there is also another side shown here: "Beware of the host when the Nibelungs shall upheave from night to day;" that is, when the

labor world awakes and asserts itself. All this makes a tremendously strong parable. Lust of gold is shown as responsible for the loss of spiritual nature, ideals, love. It has brought cruelty, oppression, lying, robbery, murder. But it also brings the social upheaval which finally awakens the true ideals and ushers in the better day.

Or, finally, we may take the drama as veiling great spiritual and eternal truths, not put there by Wagner, but inherent in the great story itself and forever working themselves out into revelations in all the great legends and in all the great events of the world. In this last view there comes out the truth of the curse of the lust of power; the truth of the real supremacy of love; the truth of the inevitableness and eternity of the reign of moral law in the world.

Looking at the universal and eternal truths, therefore, the main idea of the whole Ring drama may be given in this one phrase: "To show the contrast of the two powers that rule the world,—the power of love and the power of gold." The chief thought in The Rhine-Gold is: "Base love of gold destroys golden love, and prophesies ruin and the curse." In The Valkyrie: "The reign of law, and the inevitableness of fate." In Siegfried: "Courage, born of innocence, outvies all cunning, and, inspired by love, conquers all things." In The Dusk of the Gods: "Ambition betrays itself, but love, through self-sacrifice, is supreme, and redeems the curse." Or we may see a little more fully in some such way as this: The Rhine-Gold is a parable of the

curse of gold. Innocent enough is gold itself; it becomes a power and can become a curse when its inordinate love takes possession of the soul. Its love forsworn is sufficient to gain gold, but what is it all worth?

The Valkyrie is a parable of the punishment of violated laws. There is a reign of law in the world. Whoso offends must suffer. It is inevitable. Heaven itself is subject to its divine laws.

Siegfried is a type of perfect innocence and goodness. This hero seems an embodiment of "summer and springtide, youth and strength, beauty and love." He is the highest ideal of a free hero, caring nothing for gold, possessing all things good in himself. Such a hero of light is at once attacked by envy and hate. So he falls a victim of the dark wiles, the embodiment of envy, hatred, and greed in the child of evil.

The Dusk of the Gods is a parable of the passing away of the ancient mythologies. As light came, as the ages went on, men saw that the old legends of the gods and goddesses, who played fast and loose with law, who broke covenants, could not remain. Moral law must be supreme. Love in self-sacrifice is the great revelation. Unworthy gods, annihilated by the principle of evil which they have introduced, — this is the meaning of the allegory where the gods are devoured by the fiery flames. Myth passed to make way for truth. The gods passed away to give place to God.

There are some perplexing ethical problems involved in the drama. The infidelity of Wotan, both to love and truth, are sad pictures of the

highest of the gods. The traditions, however, of Greek and Roman mythology are similar. The relations of Siegmund and Sieglinda have classic precedent among the gods, but are antagonistic to all our human instincts. The drama shows how love is superior to all law, and yet how the violation of law is inevitably punished. The greatest teaching of the drama is that love is supreme, but that the highest love is in full harmony with the highest law. In Browning's phrase, "All's love, yet all's law."

Richard Wagner's genius in all this great work is manifest. Ordinarily the Northern mythology has a curious interest for merely a few students and scholars. But the genius of Wagner, both in poetry and music, has brought this remote and mythical world to the living interest and ken of tens of thousands in all parts of the civilized world. German literature and the whole race owe much to him for this literary revival. But another debt we also owe to him. These old legends that grew up in most primitive ages from time to time found rude redacteurs, or editors, who endeavored to string the various legends together in continuous and harmonious narrative. Such was the ancient bard of the Nibelungen Lied. So in our own day Richard Wagner has performed a similar service, but in larger way and with more wonderful genius than any who has ever touched the legends. He found their unity and eternal significance and rearranged them to tell their greatest story for all time. Essentially this great fourfold drama is the drama of a primitive and pagan

era. It is an era long before Christianity, with no mention whatever of Greek, Roman, Jewish, or Christian gods or symbols. It is the atmosphere of ancient heathendom in the wilderness of most ancient Germany and Scandinavia. Nevertheless Richard Wagner makes the ancient story a modern revelation. This is a notable achievement. The great teaching of the supremacy of love, — was this in the ancient myths or thought of the primitive people? We cannot find it on the surface of the ancient legends. And yet Wagner has not read it into them, but rather unveiled it from them. He has so arranged his ancient material as to teach this universal and eternal truth, which only later and maturer understanding has made clear as being forever in the warp and woof of all human history and literature. As Wagner gives it, this drama is a great moral study, full of seriousness, conscience, and unending consequence. In this way the genius of Richard Wagner has given new vitality and significance to ancient myth and legend. He becomes an interpreter of humanity and a teacher of the greatest truths of life.

OLIVER HUCKEL

PART I: THE SWORD IS FORGED

THE SWORD IS FORGED

ITHIN a forest, on the cliff's steep side
Yawned a great cavern, rough with gloomy rocks,
And there a mighty forge. A bellows huge
Fanned the fierce draught and flame. A gaping cleft
In the rock roof for a crude chimney served.
Two entrances the gloomy cavern had,—
One in the forest's face with foliage screened,
Another, broader, opening on the side
To other rocky caves and dismal dens.
Around the forge a smith's rude tools were strewn,
And in the midst a massive anvil stood,
And at it sat a rough and uncouth dwarf,
The forest smith, at work upon a sword.
He was strange figure, huddled, grim, grotesque,
And in the former days he wrought his craft
In the dark regions of the Nibelungs
When for swart Alberich, his brother dwarf,
He forged a tarnhelm, and received as wage
Curses and blows. 'Twas Mime, loathsome wight,
Most loathsome of the horde of Nibelungs,
But artful craftsman in all metal-work.
Ceaseless his blows upon the heated sword,
For he would temper it and make it strong;
To work a fell design his dark art dreamed.
Long had he hammered. Now he restless grew
And sore discouraged. And at last he stopped,
Ill-humored and despairing. Then he snarled:

The Sword is Forged

"What slavish torment, drudging to no end!
This stoutest sword these hands of mine have forged,—
'Tis strong enough for giant's mighty fists,—
But somehow that hot-headed stripling there
For whom 'tis made,—who pays me by abuse,—
This sword, like all the others I have made,
Soon will he take and snap it into bits,
As if I made toy weapons for his sport!"

With that, he flung the sword in angry spite
Upon the anvil, but with sudden thought
He stopped and gazed upon the ground and spake:
"One sword I ken that he could never break,—
The good blade Helpneed would defy his strength,
If only I could weld its fragments fast;
Yet all my craft for that task is in vain.
Could I, with cunning, shape that valiant blade,
Reward would come to pay for all my shame."

A moment sank he deeper still in thought,
Nodding his head and mumbling to himself:
"Within these wilds Fafner the dragon dwells;
With venom'd jaws and monstrous bulk and brawn
The Nibelung's gold-hoard he guardeth close.
Yet Siegfried's prowess, childlike, unafraid,
May prove the death-blow to the dragon's might.
Then will the Nibelung's red Ring be mine.
One sword alone is equal to that deed;

The good blade Helpneed must essay the task,
As swung by Siegfried's strong and conquering arm.
And yet, alas! that blade I cannot forge,—
That stalwart steel is far beyond my skill!"
Again he set himself to hammering,
Grumbling the while, in deepest discontent:
"What slavish torment, drudging to no end!
The stoutest sword that ever I have forged
Will never serve to do this longed-for deed.
I weld and hammer as the rascal bids;
He bends and snaps in pieces every sword,
Yet scolds me if I cease my futile work."

The Sword is Forged

Now, as he spake, came Siegfried rushing in,
Boist'rous, impetuous, from the forest wilds,
A forester's rough dress upon his limbs,
And from his shoulders swung a silver horn.
In wanton merriment he urged along
A great bear he had bridled for his sport,
Drove him toward Mime, who with terror struck
Dropped the new sword and fled behind the forge;
But Siegfried followed to his hiding-place,
Driving the bear upon him, with the shout:
"Heyho! heyho! Come on, come on, my bear!
Tear him and eat him! Rout the tinker out!"
He roared with laughter, but poor Mime shrieked:
"Away, thou brute! I want no bear near me!"
But Siegfried cried: "Double to thee we come
To make twice sure. Bruin, demand the sword!"

Trembling, the dwarf made plea, "Ho! keep him off!
There lies the sword! I finished it to-day."
And Siegfried answered: "So thy skin is saved!"
Whereat he loosed the bear, and struck at it
A blow upon the back, with the farewell:
"Off, Bruin! for I need thee now no more."
And back into the forest rushed the bear.
While from behind the forge came Mime forth
A-tremble, and with scanty breath he spake:
"It suits me well to have thee slaughter bears,—
Why didst thou bring the live brute home to me?"

Then Siegfried sat him down, and laughed aloud
Full merrily, and spake with broken speech:
"I sought a better comrade for myself
Than that glum fellow who oft sits at home.
So in the forest glades I wound my horn
And set the echoes ringing, if perchance
Some welcome friend my notes might find and bring.
Out of the tangle came this monster bear,
Who hearkened to my horn with deep-toned growl;
Yea, this rough brute doth please me more than thee,
Altho' still better luck the days may bring.
So with this bast-rope quick I bridled him
To fright from thee, thou rascal, this strong sword."

Up Siegfried sprang, and to the anvil rushed
To snatch the sword, but Mime clutched it quick
And offered it, with mock humility,
Gracious in words: "I made the weapon sharp.
I hope its edge and sheen will please thee well."

The Sword is Forged

Then Siegfried took the sword and curt replied:
"What brooks it all this sheen and sharpened edge,
Unless the steel itself be strong and true?"

And as he proved it in his hand, he spake:
"Hey! what an idle plaything is this wand,
This paltry switch,—dost thou call this a sword?"

He struck it on the anvil, and the sword
Broke in a thousand splinters at his blow,
And Mime shrank in fear. Siegfried spake on:
"See, shameless bungler, here's thy sword in bits!
Would I had smashed it on thine ugly pate.
Shall such a boaster longer brag to me?
He prates of giants and of fiercest war,
Of dauntless deeds and prowess glorious,
The while he fashions weapons, forges swords,
And boasts his craft as though all things he knew.
Yet when I handle what his skill has made,
A single hand-grip crushes all the trash.

Were he not such a vile and scurvy wretch
I would himself and all his vaunted toys
Fling in the furnace — imbecile old imp!
Perchance my loathing of him thus might end!"

He spake, and in his anger and fierce scorn
Upon a seat of stone he threw himself,
While cautious Mime kept far off, and cried:
"Now like a madman thou dost rage again!
Unless what I have made be perfect wrought
This saucy lad at once forgets all else, —
The many goodly things I gave him oft.
Dost thou remember not what I have said, —
How boys should learn to have the thankful heart?
Him thou shouldst ever willingly obey
Who always showed thee kindness and true love."

But Siegfried naught remembered of his care
Nor fulsome words, naught but his loathsome ways;
He turned his back on him in angry mood,
And Mime sneered: "Thou scornest my poor swords!
Perchance thy hunger will not scorn my food.
Come, taste the meat yon spit has roasted brown,
Or wilt thou sip this broth so savory?
I have prepared it for thy mouth alone."

Thus speaking, to young Siegfried he brought food,
And he, not turning round or speaking word,

Struck bowl and platter crashing to the ground.
A moment later spake: "I want no food
Of thine,—my own meat I myself will cook;
And for thy broth, go swill thy slop thyself!"

Whereat poor Mime looked deep hurt, and spake:
"This is the foul reward for all my love,
And this the shameful pay for all my pains."
And in a sort of ancient chant, he crooned:

"A whimpering brat I brought thee up;
I wrapped thee, squirming worm, so warm,
I brought thee food in platter and cup,
And shielded thee from every harm,

"And as thou grewest, waited on thee;
For sleep I made thy bed so soft;
Toys and horns I made for thy glee,
Each whim of thine I humored oft.

"With crafty wit I made thee free,
With shining wisdom lit thine eyes;
At home I moil and toil for thee,
While through the woods thy shadow flies.

"Thou givest me always trouble and pain,
I wear to shreds poor foolish me!
Now for my care, this is my gain,—
Only abuse and hate from thee."

Then Siegfried turned, and steadily he gazed
In Mime's face,—that face so deeply loathed,

For well he knew the treachery it masked,—
And slow he spake: "Much hast thou taught to me
And many tales, O Mime, from thy lips,
But what thou fain hadst taught me most of all—
How to endure thee—that I never learned.
Whatever food and drink thou bringest me
I feed alone on loathing and disgust;
Whenever thou dost make my couch for me,
Slumber is gone, because I hate thee so.
Whenever thou hast sought to help my wits,
I would be deaf and dumb, and nothing learn.
As soon as I behold thee with mine eyes,
Whate'er thou dost seems to me foul and wrong;
And as I see thee stand, and shamble on,
And shake and crawl and slink in ugly way,
Nodding thy pate and blinking thy red eyes,
I swear I itch to catch thee by the throat,
And crush thy life out, thou abhorrent worm!
Such, Mime, is the love I learned of thee.
If thou hast wisdom, tell me now, I pray,
One thing that vainly I have sought to learn:
I roam the woods to shun thee and forget,—
How comes it that I venture back to thee?
The beasts are dearer to my heart than thou;
The trees, the birds, the fishes in the brook,
I love them, but I hate the sight of thee.
Yea, how comes it I venture back to thee?
If thou art wise and cunning, tell me this."

And Mime made a show of tender looks,
And nearer came confidingly and spake:

"My sweet child, all this clearly goes to show
How tenderly thy heart still clings to me."

But Siegfried scornful laughed, and answered him:
"Nay, dwarf, I hate thee,—cannot bear the sight
Of thee. Forget not that so lightly, loathsome worm."

Then Mime shrank again, and slunk away
And sat far off, and slowly answered him:
"That is the wilful talk of thy wild heart,
The evil passion which thy will must tame.
'Tis natural the young should ever yearn
After the parents' nest. But this is love.
Such yearning love for me is in thy heart.
Yea, thou dost love thy Mime, aye, must love.
All that the mother bird is to her young
When in the nest it lies, before its wings
Have learned to venture on the winds in flight,—
This has the faithful Mime been to thee,
And cherished thee with love, thou silly child."

But Siegfried answered with a cunning smile:
"Hey, Mime, since so subtle is thy wit,
Make clear to me this further mystery.
I heard the birds in springtime sing so sweet;
They lured and loved each other all the day.
And thou didst tell me when I asked of thee,
That these fair warblers wife and husband were.
They kissed so lovingly together there,

A nest they built and therein brooded long;
Anon the fledgelings fluttered from the eggs,
And both the birds cared for the tender brood.
I saw in pairs the deer in the far woods,
I saw the wolves and foxes go in pairs.
I watched the father to the lair bring food
While close within the mother nursed her young.
And there I learned from this what love must be,
Nor ever from the mother took her whelps.
Now tell me, Mime, where is thy dwarf wife,
That I may call her mother? Where is she?"

In anger Mime spake: "What 's that to thee,
Thou little fool? Thou art nor bird nor fox."

But Siegfried mocked him, taking up his words:
"A whimpering brat thou brought'st me up;
A squirming wretch thou wrapp'dst me warm,—
How cam'st thou by this whimpering worm,
And didst thou make me with no mother's help?"

And Mime deep confused quick blurted out:
"Thou must believe whatever I may say,—
I am in one thy mother and thy sire."

Shouting his words, the angry Siegfried cried:
"Thou liest, loathsome imp and arrant fool!
I know the young one looketh like his sire,
And well I proved it for my very self.
Within the mirror of the limpid stream

Oft have I traced the form of bird and beast,
And seen the sun and shadows as they are.
Thus have I seen my own face in the stream,
And know its features. They are not like thine.
I seemed a glittering fish and thee a toad;
Yet toad was never father of a fish."

Harassed and deeply vexed Mime replied:
"What idle nonsense art thou prattling now!"

But Siegfried, moved by sudden thought, exclaimed:
"See now, for I discern the very thing
That heretofore I pondered all in vain;
I see the reason that I still return
When I have fled away from sight of thee.
'Tis this,—thou only canst to me reveal
My father, and my dearest mother's name."

As if a shot had struck him, Mime shrank
Into himself, and drew back from the youth,
A sudden fear upon him, as he spake:
"What father and what mother but myself!
What grotesque fancies swarm thine idle brain!"

But Siegfried clutched him by the throat and cried:
"Forsooth, must I drag out the truth from thee!
Yea, naught of thy free will thou givest me.
What I may gain is only gained by blows;
I had not even learned to use my tongue,
Except I wrested it from thee by force.

Reveal it now, thou wretch, thou loathsome knave,—
Tell me my father, and my mother's name!"

He held him fast, and gripped with awful strength,
While Mime squirmed within that mighty grasp,
And choked, and gestured with his head and hands,
Pleading release, and promising to tell.
Then Siegfried loosed his hold, while Mime gasped:
"Hold off! for thou art crushing out my life.
Let loose! and I will tell thee without guile
All that thou askest. O thou thankless boy,
Now hear the reasons for thy hate of me:
I am no father and no kin of thine,
Yet dost thou owe thy life and all to me.
Alien thou art, yet I am thy true friend;
Out of my goodness guarded I thy life,
And now thou payest me a precious wage.
Fool that I was to hope for gratitude!
Once long ago, in yonder woodland wild,
I found a woman weeping piteous.
I gently led her to this cavern home,
And gave her refuge at this sheltered hearth.
She was in travail, sad and sore distrest,
And here in secret brought she forth her babe;
Deep anguish was upon her, and she groaned
In direful pain. All that I could I did
To ease her woe, but human help was vain.
She died, but Siegfried saw the light, and lived."

And Siegfried, deeply moved, sat down and wept:
"Dear mother, and for me she gave her life!"

Mime spake on: "She gave thee to my charge;
Gladly I gave thee shelter in my home.
What care and tasks did Mime take for thee!
What woes and worries the poor wight endured!
'A whimpering brat, I brought thee up'" . . .

But Siegfried quick broke in: "Meseems that tale
I heard before. Who named me Siegfried?—tell!"

And Mime spake: "Thy mother gave command
That I should call thee Siegfried. By that name
Thou shouldst grow strong and fair and conqueror.
'I wrapped thee, a squirming worm, so warm'" . . .

Again upon the tale did Siegfried break:
"Now tell me what fair name my mother bore?"

But Mime said: "In sooth, I scarcely know—
'I brought thee food in platter and cup'" . . .

Fiercely cried Siegfried, rising as he spake:
"Her name,—I bid thee tell me instantly!"

And Mime trembling answered brokenly:
"I thought I had forgot. But wait! Methinks—
Sieglinda—she was called. Yea, that it was.
She sadly gave thee to my charge, and died.
'I shielded thee from every harm'" . . .

Urged Siegfried: "Tell me now my father's name!"
Harshly spake Mime: "Him I never saw."

Then Siegfried: "Did my mother breathe his name?"
But Mime answered: "Only this she said,
That he was slain in fight, and no word more.
She gave thee fatherless to me alone.—
'And as thou grewest, waited on thee;
'For sleep I made thy bed so soft'" . . .

No sooner had the ancient tale begun
Than Siegfried cried: "Subdue that starling song!
Never shall I give credence to thy words,
But take them as a bundle of new lies.
Show me on witness that thou speakest true!"

But Mime spake: "What witness is enough?"
Siegfried impetuous said: "No more mere words.
My ears will never trust thee. Give me proof
In something that my eyes may look upon.
What witness for my eyes canst thou bring forth?"

But Mime paused, uncertain and perplexed;

Then slowly went and fetched a broken sword
In two great pieces, and he slowly spake:
"This blade thy dying mother gave to me;
Thus to repay my toil and faithful care,
This was the scanty wages that I had.
Look, what a piece of shattered steel it is!
Quoth she: 'Thy father swung it valiantly
In that last fight where he was slain and lost.'"

The Sword is Forged

Aroused and joyous, Siegfried shouted out:
"These fragments thou shalt forge me for my sword,
And I shall wield my destined blade at last!
Quickly now, Mime, hasten to the work!
Art thou a master?—show me then thy craft!
Cheat me no more with paltry toys, for now
Henceforth I weld these fragments for my sword,
And if I find thy boasted work amiss,
Thy forging poor, or if thou playest tricks
With this my trusty steel, be sure thy back
Shall feel my blows, and learn my burnishing.
I swear to swing this blade this very day!
This day I wield my mighty father's sword!"

Now Mime at this speech alarmed cried out:
"What wouldst thou with the sword this very day?"
And Siegfried answered with exultant shout:
"Forth I would wander to the great wide world,
Forth from this wood to come back nevermore!
What boundless joy to be forever free,
With naught to hold me to this petty life!

For thou art not my father nor my kin,
And far away I fare to seek my home.
This hearth of thine is now no longer mine,
Nor will I longer rest beneath thy roof.
As swims the fish with gladness in the flood,
As flies the finch in freedom through the blue,
So bound I into liberty, — as swift
As flows the mountain stream or forest gale.
Hark, Mime, nevermore shall I return!"

Therewith, he stormed away into the woods,
And Mime, in great terror, called to him:
"Hold, Siegfried, hold! O whither dost thou go?
Ho! Siegfried! Siegfried! hold, I say! —
See there he hastes away, and here I sit.
To my old woes, there comes a new distress.
How deeply am I tangled in my snares!
How can I help myself, and hold him fast,
And lure this mad-cap into Fafner's lair?
How can I forge these bits of stubborn steel?
I cannot fuse them in a furnace flame,
Nor by my magic hammer conquer them.
The Nibelung's hot hate, and dire distress,
And drudging sweat are all a useless waste.
The strong blade Helpneed never can be forged!
Mime has done his best, — it will not weld!"
He spake in deep despair, and low crouched down
Behind his anvil, utterly forlorn.

Now as he sulked, the Wanderer drew nigh,
Moving majestic from the forest wilds.
Into the cave he stalked, and looked around.

He wore a dark blue mantle, flowing long;
And for a spear, he bore a mighty staff.
His hat's wide brim hung low upon his brow
And half concealed his sightless eye. He spake:
"All hail, thou cunning smith. And wilt thou lend
To-day thy house and hearth to weary guest?"

In terror Mime heard the voice, and cried:
"Who is it that doth seek me in these wilds?
Who dares to track me to my lone retreat?"

And Wotan spake: "They call me Wanderer.
Already o'er the world I've travelled far;
Across the earth's broad back I roam at will."

And spiteful Mime curtly answered him:
"Then take thyself away and tarry not,
If thou art truly called the Wanderer."
Then spake the Wanderer: "Alway good men
Have given welcome to me as their guest;
'Tis evil hearts that ever fear ill fate."
But Mime answered: "Ill fate lives with me,
And wouldst thou add to it yet greater woe?"

The Wanderer advanced, and slowly spake:
"Much have I sought to learn, and much I know;
And oft and wisely have I counselled men;
Oft have I lightened their distress of heart."
But Mime, still suspicious, answered him:
"Doubtless thou knowest much and speaketh smooth,

But neither thee nor thy wise words want I.
Alone I am, and wish to be alone.
Nor do I welcome vagrant loiterers."

Still nearer came the Wanderer, and said:
"Many have deemed erstwhile that they were wise,
Yet scarcely knew their deep and abject need;
And they have asked, and full I answered them,
And with my words came wisdom to their minds."

Cried Mime, as the Wanderer drew near,
A secret terror filling his false heart:
"Many for idle knowledge seek and strive.
What I have learned suffices for my craft;
My wits are sharp and strong, I need thee not;
So bid thee, wise one, keep thy wandering way!"
Whereat the Wanderer approached the fire,
And sitting down beside the hearth, he said:
"Here at thy hearth I sit, and stake my head
As wager in a warfare of our wits.
My head is thine, and fairly won by thee,
If thou shalt ask me questions tangled hard,
And I not free them with a word of wit."

Then Mime murmured, frightened and perplexed:
"How shall I rid me of this crafty spy?
Some knotty questions must I set as trap."
Then bold he spake, altho' his heart was faint:
"Thou wagerest thy head against my hearth,—

Look sharp, if thou wouldst save it in the game!
Three are the questions I shall ask of thee."

And Wotan spake: "Three shall my answers be."

Awhile sat Mime, wrapped in sombre thought,
For grave the issue hanging on his words;
At length he brightened, and abruptly asked:
"Full long upon this broad earth's rugged back
Thy wanderings have led thee, roving far,—
Then tell me, if thou canst, what race is that
Which dwells beneath the earth in caverns dark?"

And Wotan answered, smiling at the words,—
So easy seemed the simple question asked:
"Beneath the earth in caverns dark there dwell
The Nibelungs,—their land is Nibelheim.
Black elves are they, and swarthy Alberich
Ruled them as master in the ancient days.
He swayed them by the Ring of magic might,
And to his will he tamed the drudging dwarfs;
The richest treasure and the shimmering gold
They heaped for him wherewith to win the world.—
Now, dwarf, what further wouldst thou ask of me?"

Long Mime pondered, then he further asked:
"Thou knowest much of earth's dark hidden depths.

Pierce Library
Eastern Oregon University
1410 L Avenue
La Grande, OR 97850

Now tell me, if thou canst, what is the race
That hath its dwelling on the earth's broad back?"

And Wotan grimly smiled, and answer made:
"The race of giants dwells on earth's broad back,
And their rough country is the Riesenheim.
Fasolt and Fafner are the giants twain
Who envied Alberich and all his might;
And for themselves they won his wondrous hoard
And ravished from him the world-mastering Ring.
For it the brothers rose in fatal strife,
And Fasolt fell. Now as a dragon grim
The mighty Fafner guards the golden heap.—
Propound thy third inquiry, cunning smith."

And Mime, full absorbed in thought, spake slow:
"Yea, much thou knowest, Wanderer, of them
Below the earth and on the earth's broad back.
But tell me truly, if thou hast the wit,
What race has dwelling on the cloud-capped heights?"

And Wotan answered: "On the cloud-capped heights,
Dwelleth the Aesir, the immortal Gods.
Their radiant palace is Valhalla called.
Beings of light are they, and Wotan's self,
A light-crowned Alberich of the heavenly realm,

Is sovereign and commander of the host.
From the world's ash-tree and its sacred bough
Once for himself he shaped a mighty shaft:
The bough may fail, the shaft shall never fail.
Now with this sceptre Wotan rules the world.
Deep in the shaft he cut his rune of truth,
The sacred signs of treaties and of laws.
Whoever holds the world's haft in his grasp,
Which sceptre now the mighty Wotan wields,
To him the Nibelung's vast host will kneel,
To him the giants must submit their will.
All must obey the spear's resistless lord."
And as he spake, as if by merest chance,
He touched the spear upon the ground. At once
A rumble of low thunder shook the earth,
And Mime started, fear-struck. Wotan spake:
"Now tell me, cunning dwarf, have I told truth?
And have I plainly won my wagered head?"

With fear renewed, and trembling in each limb,
Poor Mime watched the mighty Wanderer.
He sought to take his tools, and steal away,
Nor meet dread Wotan's glance and lightning eye,
As in a terror woe-begone, he said:
"Questions and head thou hast redeemed and won,—
Now, Wanderer, I bid thee go thy way!"

But Wotan looked him o'er, and gravely spake:

The Sword is Forged

"What doth concern thy welfare most of all
Thou shouldst have asked of me, if thou wert wise:
For thou didst hold my head in pledge for it.
But since thou didst not know thy deepest need,
I claim thy head as wager in my turn.
Thou didst not give me greeting as a guest;
My head I gave as wager for thy hearth;
So, by the law of wager, is thy head
Now pledge, that thou shalt answer what I ask.
Thrice shall I ask, so, Mime, wake thy wits!"

Cowed to submission, Mime cringing spake:
"'Tis long since I have left my fatherland,
And from the womb of mother-earth I came;
But Wotan's eye lights on me, cows me down,
As here into my cave he comes, and peers;
His gaze bewilders all my mother-wit.
Yet quick and bright my wisdom now must be,
So, Wanderer, make haste! Ask what thou wilt!
Perchance good luck may still be on my side,
And help the dwarf to save his witless head."

So Wotan thus began his questions three.
"Now, worthy dwarf, first let me question put:
Which is the race that Wotan dealt with sore,
Yet loves withal most tenderly at heart?"

And Mime answered: "Little do I hear
Of thy great heroes, yet I lightly solve
This riddle. 'Tis the valiant Volsung race

Of which thou speakest, yea, the chosen brood
That Wotan fathered and so fondly loved,
Though scant the grace he grants them with his care.
Siegmund and fair Sieglinda sprang from them,
A twin-born pair, and turbulent of soul;
And of them Siegfried, mightiest Volsung born.—
Now, Wanderer, once have I saved my head."

Quick Wotan spake: "Aye, thou hast rightly named
The race! 'T is hard to catch thee, arrant rogue!
Now this first query hast thou solved full well.
The second question hear and answer me:
A wily Nibelung holds Siegfried fast,—
Him whom fate destines for the dragon's death,—
And thus the dwarf doth hope to win the Ring,
And make himself the sovereign of the world.
Now tell me with what sword must Siegfried fight,
To bring the dragon Fafner to his death?"

Forgetting what the question might portend,
And eager in the theme, quick Mime spake:
"The valiant sword hath Helpneed for its name.
'Twas thrust by Wotan in an ash-tree's stem;
'Twas his alone whose might could draw it forth.
Full many heroes strove, but stirred it not,
But valiant Siegmund won it by his strength.

The Sword is Forged

Full nobly did he wield the sword in strife,
Until at last on Wotan's spear it broke.
The shattered fragments with all care were kept
By a wise smith, for he alone knew well
That only by this Wotan-sword shall he,
The bold and foolish boy, destroy the foe."
Pleased with his words, the dwarf triumphant spake:
"So have I saved my head a second time."

Then quickly spake the Wanderer again:
"Yea, of the wise ones thou art wisest-wit.
Who can approach thy cunning craftiness?
Yet, if by cunning craft thou wilt now have
This child, this simple hero for thy use,
Yet must I fret thee with one question more.
Tell me, thou wily weapon-smith, whose hand
Shall forge strong Helpneed from the stubborn bits?"

In trembling terror Mime rose, and cried:
"The stubborn bits of steel! the mighty sword!
Alas, what ails me! I am all dismayed!
What shall I answer? What course shall I take?
Would I had let th' accursed steel alone!
My theft has tangled me in pain and woe.
The stalwart splinters, they will never yield
To my strong blows; nor will the fiercest fires
Smelt them to welding point. The wisest smith
Fails in his craft. Now who shall forge the sword

I cannot shape? How master this great deed?

The Sword is Forged

Arising from the hearth, great Wotan spake:
"Thrice didst thou hurl thy questions at my head,
And thrice I saved my head by ready wit.
Mere idle knowledge soughtest thou from me,
And what was nearest to thy heart and need,
This thou didst never ask, nor seeming care.
Now when I find it, dazed are all thy wits,
And as my wager falls thy witty head.
Now, thou ill-fated dwarf, hark to my words,—
'He only who has never felt a fear
Shall forge the good sword Helpneed for his use.'"

He spake and turned, but said as Mime stared:
"Thy wise head guard henceforth! I leave it thus
Forfeit to him who never learned to fear."
Scornful he turned away, and striding fast
Soon in the forest he was lost to view.
O'erwhelmed with terror, Mime fell. He stared
Into the sunlit forest. Wild with fear
He trembled like a leaf, and shrieking cried:
"Accursed light! The air is all aflame!
What is it flickers forth and flashes there
With swaying, swirling, and engulfing beams?
See how it glimmers in the sunlight glint!
What is it hisses so, and snarls so shrill?
Hear how it growls and roars and crashes on!
It rushes on me, breaking through the woods!

It yawns upon me with its threatening jaws!
The dragon Fafner clutches me! O woe!"

Groaning aloud, he crouched down low to hide
Behind the massive anvil of the forge,
As Siegfried with a cry broke from the woods,
No dragon, but a lusty laughing youth,
And with his ringing voice to Mime called:
"Ho! lazy fellow! hast thou finished yet?
Tell me, how goes it with my valiant sword?"
He entered. In surprise he stopped and cried:
"Ho, Mime, where art thou? Hast stolen off?
Come forth, thou knave! Where dost thou hide
thyself?"

A weak voice near the anvil feebly asked:
"And is it thou, boy? Comest thou alone?"

And Siegfried mocking asked: "Ah, art thou
there
Behind the forge? What art thou plotting now?
Or wert thou grinding there my strong
sword's edge?"

Confused came Mime forth, and mumbling
said:
"'He only who has never felt a fear
Shall forge the good sword Helpneed for his
use.'
Too wise my wits, too weak my trembling
arm."

Siegfried heard not his words, and angry
spake:

"Wilt thou not tell, or must I teach thee how?"
But Mime murmured still, yet scarce aloud:
"Where shall I hope for help? My wily head
I lost in wager, forfeit unto him
'Who never yet has learned the name of fear.'"

But coming to his wits, sly Mime spake:
"Him would I flee who knoweth how to fear!
But fear I never set to teach to thee;
Fool-like, I did forget the one good thing.
My only lesson was to teach thee love
To me, and utterly my lesson failed.
How can I waken fear within thy soul?"

Whereat young Siegfried seized him, shouting out:
"Hey! must I help? What plot is in thy brain?"

And Mime answered quick: "In care for thee,
And only for thy good, I brooded deep
How I might wisely show thee weighty things."

Then Siegfried laughed: "Aye, down beneath the forge
Well wert thou sunk in brooding over me.
Forsooth, what weighty matters took thee there?"

More slow and slyly Mime said to him:
"For thee I learned what fear is, that to thee,
Thou foolish lad, I might the fine art teach."

But Siegfried spake: "Fear,—tell me what is fear?"

And Mime asked him: "Hast thou not known fear,
And wouldst thou from these simple woods go forth
And dare the perils of the wondrous world?
What booteth thee the strongest blade of steel,
If all unknown to thee is mighty fear?"

Impatient, Siegfried spake: "What foolish redes
Alone thou findest to reveal to me."

But Mime answered: "'T is thy mother's rede
That now my mouth hath spoken unto thee.
To what I promised her I must be true,—
That I would never send thee to go forth
To all the lures and wiles of this great world
Until I taught thee truly how to fear."

But Siegfried questioned: "If it is an art,
Why is it I have never learned the craft?
Now tell me plain,—What meanest thou by fear?"

And curiously eager, Mime asked:
"Ne'er hast thou felt in some deep forest gloom
By gathering dusk in lonely, darksome glen,
When with a sudden rush and mighty roar
A fierce and savage growling strikes thine ear;

And dazzling flashes round thee glance and glare;
And swift and surging tumult sweeps and swirls—
At such an hour, has there not gripped thy soul
A grisly horror, creeping through thy frame?
Have not thy limbs by gruesome shudders failed,
And all thy fading senses swam confused?
Yea, in thy breast all trembling in dismay
Was not thy heart most madly hammering?—
Hast thou not felt these terrors in thy soul,
Then fear is still a stranger unto thee."

But Siegfried spake: "Yea, wondrous it must be.
Steadfast and calm beats ever my strong heart.
This gruesomeness, and shaking, and dismay,
This horror, dreadful terror, shaking limbs,—
Most eager am I now to feel them all,
And learn the pastime of this new delight.
Yet how, O Mime, shall I grasp the art?
How couldst thou, bungler, here my master be?"

Quick Mime answered with a knowing leer:
"Now heed me well, and I will teach thee all;
By brooding long and deep it came to me.
For lo! I know a dragon great and grim
Who hath destroyed and wasted many men.
Fafner, forsooth, will teach thee what is fear,
If thou wilt follow me to his dark lair."

And Siegfried asked: "Where lies he, and his lair?"

And Mime answered: "'T is Hate-Cavern called;
Far east it lies, along this wood's rough edge."

Spake Siegfried: "Is it near the world I seek?"

Quoth Mime: "Yea, near to the world it lies."

Full joyful Siegfried cried: "Come, lead me on,
For I must know the meaning of this fear;
Then forth I go into the great wide world!
Be quick! Forge me my strong and valiant sword!
I fain would swing it in the wondrous world!"

But sadly Mime spake: "The sword,—alack!"

Cried Siegfried: "Quick, into thy smithy run
And fetch me out the work thou shapest there!"

Poor Mime whimpered: "That accursed steel!
I know not how to patch it up again!
No dwarf hath strength to sway such magic might!
Who knows no fear, he well may find the art."

Strong in his strength, Siegfried made bold reply:
"And thou wouldst cheat me, sluggard, by sharp tricks!
Thou art a bungler,—that thou must admit.

Seek not to fool me with thy paltry lies.
Fetch me the splinters of the sword, and then,
Great clumsy botcher, get thee from my sight!
My father's blade must yield itself to me;
Yea, mine own hands shall forge the famous sword."

The Sword is Forged

To work he rushed, while Mime slyly sneered:
"Hadst thou learned well the art I taught to thee,
Now had my teaching come to some reward;
But thou wert always laggard at thy task.
How will thy lazy spirit serve thee now?"

Retorted Siegfried: "Where the master balked
How better could the scholar ever do,
Altho' he always listened and obeyed?
Begone from here, I say, nor meddle more,
Lest in the forge I melt thee with the steel!"
Turning he heaped the charcoal on the hearth,
And with the bellows blew it strong and well;
Within a vise he fixed the splintered sword,
And quick began to file it into shreds.
But Mime, watching, cried out in dismay:
"What art thou doing? Take the solder there!
'T is fused and ready for thy working! See!"

But Siegfried cried: "Out on thy soldering!
I need it not. Such stuff can forge no sword!"

Again sly Mime cried: "The file is done,—
Ruined the rasp. Why shred up all the steel?"
But Siegfried answered: "Yea, each splinter here

Must fall to finest shreds before my eyes;
What is most marred, that will best mended be."

So Siegfried filed away, and Mime spake:
"Here helps no craftsman's art,—that see I well;
The fool's own folly speeds the work alone.
See how he bends and toils with mighty strokes!
He shreds the stubborn steel without a strain.
Though ancient as the cave and wood am I,
Yet have I never seen such wondrous work.
That he will forge the sword full well I ken,
And since he knows no fear he will achieve.
The Wanderer, great Wotan, spake true word.
How shall I hide my trembling head? For see!
Unto this dauntless youth it surely falls,
If Fafner does not teach him how to fear.
And how shall I e'er gain that magic Ring?
Accursèd destiny, it holds me fast!
No light I find, no way that I may bend
To mine own will this lad that knows no fear."

Meanwhile young Siegfried, filing with a will,
Made small the fragments into finest shreds,
Then put them in a crucible and placed
It firm within the hot fire of the forge.
He called to Mime: "Tell me, Mime, now,
The weapon's name that I have filed to shreds."

The brooding Mime wakened up, and said:
"Helpneed is named this mighty blade of thine,

SIEGFRIED FORGING THE SWORD

For so thy dying mother told to me."
Seizing the bellows, Siegfried blew a blast,
And high the flames upstarted, as he sang:

The Sword is Forged

"HELPNEED! Helpneed!
Conquering sword
With mightiest blow did I break thee!
O shreds, give good heed,
This is my word,—
My strength and this fire shall remake thee!

"Ho-ho and ho-heigh!
Bellows must blow!
Trees in the woodlands waved lightly!
Ash-tree so high,
Leaping thy glow,
See how it burneth so brightly!

"Ho-ho and ho-heigh!
Bellows must blow!
Branches so bravely are flaming!
Sparks flying high,
Dancing the glow!
Fuse me the sword of my naming.

"Ho-ho and ho-heigh!
Bellows must blow,
While proud steel grows gentle and yielding!
Victory 's nigh!
Brighten the glow!
Tempered blade soon my hand shall be wielding!"

As Siegfried sang, sly Mime muttered low:

The Sword is Forged

"The sword is forged, and dragon Fafner slain,—
I see it all before me, clear as fate.
Both hoard and Ring he wins in strife. How then
Can I find ways to snatch and win the prize?
By craft and skill, both must be surely mine,
Safely to keep my head upon my neck.
This will I do. When he is worn in fight,
Surely he will be thirsty and crave drink.
I will a baneful potion brew from roots
Culled by my hands; whereof one single drop,
And he will sink in sleep as deep as death.
With that same valiant sword he forges there,
Quickly he must be swept from out my path,
Then mine shall be the golden hoard and Ring!
Hey! Wanderer most wise, was I so dull?
How dost thou like my crafty wit to-day?
Have I not found a way to win my goal?"

In glee he sprang and ran to fetch his bowls,
From which he poured decoctions in a pot,
And mingled therewith spices and black herbs,
And placed it slyly on the near-by hearth.

The while young Siegfried poured the fiery steel
Into a mould, and plunged the seething mass
Beneath the water, where its hiss and steam
Made music, as again he gayly sang:

"HO-HO and ho-heigh!
Bellows must blow!
Fiery metal is hissing and steaming,

Then cold doth it lie
In faint, dying glow,
For dead is its glory and gleaming.

"Steel, give good heed,
Hark to my word!
Unto battle and blood shall I bring thee!
Helpneed! Helpneed!
Conquering sword!
Unto victory swift shall I swing thee!"

Again into the coals he thrust the steel,
And plied the bellows, and the flame leaped up,
And as he worked, his eye on Mime fell,
Who in the fire has set the savory pot.
And Siegfried asked: "What does the clumsy dolt
Cook for his meat? While I am smelting steel,
What molten mess is being brewed by him?"

As Mime cooked, Siegfried both forged and talked:
"The craftsman, Mime, now learns cooking arts;
The smithy and its craft serves him no more.
The swords he made I shattered into shreds,
And what he cooks,—bah! I will use it not!
He strives to teach me what it is to fear;
He tells me that afar a teacher dwells,—
For what he best can do, to cringe and fear,
That somehow he can never teach to me.
In all things fool and bungler doth he seem!"
Now from the fire Siegfried drew out the mould

The Sword is Forged

And broke it, and lay down the gleaming steel
Upon the anvil. While with mighty strokes,
His hammer making music, thus he sang:

"HO-HO and ho-heigh!
Fly, hammer, fly!
And forge me my radiant sword!
Once red-lit, the blood
On thy cold body poured,
But thy laugh cooled the ruddy warm flood!

"Ho-ho and ho-heigh!
Fly, hammer, fly!
On the hot steel now blushing so red;
Yea, yield as a bride.
Quick sparks dost thou shed
On one who has tamed thy wild pride!

"Ho-ho and ho-heigh!
Fly, hammer, fly!
And forge me my radiant sword!
Thou laughest on me
In the merriest glee,
But on others be grim as a lord!

"Ho-ho and ho-heigh!
Fly, hammer, fly!
Fire and stroke have done well. Ye are made!
Now banish thy blush,
And grow cold for the rush,
And keen for the fight, my good blade!"

He sang, and swung the blade once in the air,
And plunged it into water, where it hissed

Like a great nest of serpents. As he fixed
The sword-blade in its hilt, sly Mime spake,
Communing with his dark and cunning soul:
"At last the mighty keen-edged sword is forged,
And Fafner, my dread foe, by it shall fall.
And now is ready likewise the dark draught
To vanquish Siegfried when great Fafner falls.
This guile must win for me the longed-for prize.
Triumph I must! The Ring must I attain!
Ah! now 't is almost mine,—the shining Ring
That once my brother shaped, and with it dowered
A mighty spell,—the glittering Ring of gold
That overmasters all,—by Mime won;
I hold it and I govern over all!
Ah, Alberich, who once wert lord o'er me,
Now shall I force to serve me as a thrall;
I shall be prince of all the Nibelungs,
And humble shall they bow before my will!
Yea, all that live shall kneel before the dwarf,
Once so despised and buffeted and scoffed.
Lo, gods and heroes throng to view my wealth;
The great wide world shall cower at my command,
Or tremble if I speak in angry tone.
No more shall Mime toil and moil in pain;
Others shall drudge for him, and heap his wealth.
Mime, the mighty, the omnipotent,
Prince of the Nibelungs, lord of the world!
Hey, Mime! what a lucky dog thou art!
Who could believe such fortune come to thee?"

The Sword is Forged

The Sword is Forged

As Mime had been mumbling in low tones
That none but his own ears could clearly hear,
Siegfried was busy finishing his sword,
And sharpening, and singing as he worked:

"HELPNEED! Helpneed!
Conquering sword!
Hilted complete by the might of my word,
Broken in twain,
I renewed thee again,
Nevermore to be shattered or scattered!

"By my stricken sire
Lost was thy fire;
By the living son
Is thy new glory won.
For him now laughs all its lustre and sheen,
For him is its edge unyielding and keen!

"Helpneed! Helpneed!
Conquering sword!
To life I awake thee by magical word!
Thou layest at morn
Dead and forlorn,
Now thou shinest reliant, defiant.
Out, let all feel
Thy quick tempered steel!
Help thou the brave,
And cut down the knave!
See, Mime thou smith! I have held to my word!
Behold the dread might of Siegfried's strong sword!"

Whereat he smote the anvil with one blow

And split it from the top to lowest base.
It fell asunder with a mighty crash
Like some great oak cloven by lightning blast.
And Mime sank in terror to the ground
Flat as a toad. While Siegfried waved aloft,
Shouting with joy, his shimmering great sword.

The Sword is Forged

PART II: THE DRAGON IS SLAIN

THE DRAGON IS SLAIN

DEEP was the forest, dense the matted boughs,
And thick the tangle of the underbrush.
But here an open space where rising ground
Formed a green knoll. On one side towering high
A great rock cliff was sheer with fissures rent.
'T was night,—a gloomy night,—and in the gloom
Far in the forest yawned a cavern's mouth
But dimly seen. Against the rocky wall,
Where the great cliff began to rear its bulk,
There leaned the shadowed form of Alberich,
The craftiest of all the Nibelungs.
In sulky brooding, thus he muttered low:
"Here in the forest wilds and sombre night,
I keep my watch by Hate-Cave, Fafner's cave;
With ears alert and eager piercing eye.—
O fateful day, is this thy coming light?
Is that thy dawning in the darkness there?"

For as he spake, a gust of tempest broke
Wild through the forest, and a glimmering light
Shone blue among the trees. Cried Alberich:

"Nay, 't is no glimmering of a coming dawn.
What threatening gleam is that,—a radiant glow
That rushes near like striding fiery steed.
It courses through the woods, flashing this way!

Is it the dragon-slayer drawing near?
Is this the destined hour of Fafner's fate?"

The tempest died away, the light was gone,
And, in amaze, swart Alberich spake low:
"The gleam, the glow, is faded. All is night.
Yet hold, what comes, a shining shadow there?"

And from the woods the Wanderer walked forth.
Pausing in front of Alberich, he said:
"By night to Hate-Cave have I stealthy come;
Who meets me lurking in the darkness there?"

Now as he spake, the heavy tempest clouds
Were rifted, and the moonlight breaking forth
Shone on the Wanderer's majestic form.
Then Alberich discerned him, and recoiled
In dread surprise, but soon in wrath he cried:
"And dost thou dare to show thyself to me?
What wouldst thou here? Villain, avaunt my path!
Get hence, I say, thou shameless, lawless god!"

But Wotan sneered at him: "Swart Alberich,
Bidest thou here? And guardest Fafner's house?"

Taunted fierce Alberich: "And does thy greed
Goad thee to further acts of treachery?
Tarry not here, but onward take thyself!
Thy guile has wrought the world most dire distress.

Avaunt, thou traitor, fare forth and begone!" The
But Wotan spake: "As witness here I came, Dragon
And not as worker. Who doth bar my way?" is Slain

With spiteful laughter, Alberich replied:
"Thou trickster treacherous, were I as dull
As once thou kennest,—blind and dumb and bound,—
How soon again thy ruse would lure me on,
And ravish from me the all-mastering Ring.
Beware me now! I know thy wiles full well;
I see thy weakness now laid bare as day.
With my gold-hoard thou hast wiped out thy debts,
And with my Ring hast paid the giant's wage.
Who for thee reared Valhalla on the heights?
What to these churls thy solemn word had vowed
Is writ in runes to this day on thy spear,
Nor darest thou take back by force from them
The rightful wage these giants rightly won;
Else wouldst thou shame and shatter thine own spear,
And that great sceptre of the heavenly world
Would fall, dishonored, into worthless dust."

Then spake the Wanderer with voice profound:
"'T was no eternal runes bound thee to me,
Base schemer. 'T was my spear's eternal strength,
And therefore do I ward it well for strife."

Cried Alberich: "How proud thy boasted strength,

And yet how fearful doth thy spirit sink!—
The treasure's lord, dread Fafner, by my curse
Foredoomed, is soon to meet his awful death.
Who shall inherit all the glittering gold?
Shall I, the Nibelung, clutch it once more?
This fear torments thee with an endless dread;
For if it comes again into these hands,
Not as the giants will I hide its power.
Then tremble, high protector of all gods!
For I shall storm Valhalla with my hosts,
And conquer all things to my vengeful will."

Calm Wotan said: "I know thy schemes full well.
Yet naught they trouble me. For heed me now,
He only wields the Ring who first has won."

Quick answer wily Alberich gave forth:
"How darkly dost thou speak what well I know!
Thy boldness hangs on heroes of thy kin,
On sons that blossom forth from thine own blood.
Hast thou not nourished up a stripling bold,
That he may pluck for thee the very fruit
Which thou thyself wouldst never dare to thieve?"

But Wotan spake: "Pray keep thy senseless taunts
For Mime,—thy dread peril brings he near.
Hither he leads a stripling, bold and strong,
Who soon shall bring old Fafner to his death.
This youth knows naught of me. He works alone

For Mime, and for him the dragon slays.
And so, my friend, I say to thee forsooth,
Here is a chance to work thy selfish schemes.
Heed thou my word, and be upon thy guard,—
The boy knows nothing of the magic Ring
Till Mime shall disclose it unto him."

The Dragon is Slain

Then Alberich in doubtful accents asked:
"And wilt thou keep thine own hand from the hoard?"

But Wotan spake: "Him whom I love full well
I leave unholpen. Yea, he stands or falls
As his own lord, free of all aid of mine.
Only in such strong heroes do I hope."

Again asked Alberich: "And must I strive
With Mime only for the long-sought Ring?"

Said Wotan: "Yea, besides thy eager self,
'T is only he who covets that gold-hoard."

Then anxiously grim Alberich replied:
"Tell me, shall I not win it once again?"

The Wanderer made answer: "Hither comes
A hero who shall set the gold-hoard free
For which the Nibelungs are full of greed.
Fafner, who guards the Ring, shall surely fall,—
Then who first grasps shall surely win the Ring.
Wouldst thou know more? There Fafner sleeps;
If thou shouldst warn the dragon of his death,

Fain would he give to thee the worthless toy.—
See, I myself will waken him for thee."

So speaking Wotan faced the cave, and called:
"Forth, Fafner, forth! Thou dragon fierce, awake!"

In anxious wonder, Alberich spake low:
"What means the madman,—that the treasure 's mine?"

Then woke a lazy roar from the deep cave,—
The dragon's snarl, "Who stirs me from my sleep?"

And Wotan called: "A friend is waiting here
To warn thee of great danger. Yea, he gives
Thy life to thee, if thou give to his hand
The golden treasure that thou guardest well."

But Fafner asked: "What gain I in return?"

Cried Alberich: "Awaken, Fafner, come!
Arouse, great dragon, for a hero bold
Is drawing near to match his strength with thine."

Drawled Fafner: "Ah, I hunger for that food."

Then Wotan added: "Brave the boy and bold,
And keen-edged is the sword his strong hand swings."

Urged Alberich again: "He seeks one thing,—

The golden Ring. Quick grant the Ring to me.
So shall the strife be stayed; and all the hoard
Thou still shalt guard, and know long years of peace."

The Dragon is Slain

But dragon Fafner yawned, and sleepy growled:
"Here do I rest and drowse. Leave me alone."

Then Wotan laughing spake to Alberich:
"Now Alberich, that stroke has failed. But stay
Thine anger's storm, nor call me crafty rogue.
One council give I thee, and heed it well.
All things go forward in their wonted way,
Nor canst thou alter them, nor stop their course.
I leave thee here alone,—be on thy guard.
Contend with Mime, for thy brother's craft
Perchance thou knowest better than all else;
What further happens thou shalt quickly learn."

So saying, he was gone within the woods,
With sound of tempest and a thunder roar
And lightning glow. When Wotan passed, they ceased.

And watching him, spake Alberich in wrath:
"There rides he swift away on lightning speed,
And leaves me scoff and scorn, and care and shame.
Yea, laugh away, ye god enlightener,
False spirited and gluttonous in greed;
The day shall come when all the gods shall fade.

For while the ruddy gold in sunlight gleams,
So long, I keep my wary watch on it,
And at the last shall spite work out its ends."

Within a rocky cleft, he slinking crept,
While twilight of the morning slowly dawned.

As day more fully broke, came Mime forth,
Peering most anxious at each darkened spot,
And with him, stalwart Siegfried with his sword
Hung in rope girdle. As the sun grew high
And the deep shadows fled, Mime exclaimed,
"We reach the place. Here let us stop and wait."

Seating himself beneath a linden-tree,
Siegfried looked round, and spake: "How shall I learn
What fear is? All the road you led me here,
And all the livelong night through woodlands dark
We two have come, wending a weary way.
Now, Mime, henceforth shall we move apart,
Unless I find here what I fain would learn,
Alone thou farest, I am free of thee!"

And Mime spake, still glancing toward the cave:
"Believe me, comrade, if to-day and thus
Thou dost not learn the lesson what fear is,
No other place or time can teach it thee.
Yea, dost thou see that darksome cavern mouth?

There dwells a dragon fierce, of gruesome bulk;
A grisly monster of great burly might,
With threatening jaws he gapes. And in one gulp,
Both skin and scalp, the brute will swallow thee."

Laughed Siegfried: "I must keep his gullet closed,
And from his sharp-toothed jaw hold far away!"
Then further Mime added: "Poisoned breath
And poisoned froth do issue from his mouth,
And if this deadly spume upon thee falls,
Then will its venom shrivel up thy flesh."

But Siegfried lightly said: "His venomed spume
Shall touch me not. Quick shall I leap aside."

But still spake Mime: "And a serpent's tail,
Twisting and strong, this dragon slashes round;
If that should catch thee fast and twist thee up
'T would break and grind thy limbs like tender glass!"

Boldly spake Siegfried: "From his twisting tail
I shall keep free, by watching close and keen.
Yet, tell me, has this dragon-beast a heart?"

Quoth Mime: "Yea, a merciless, hard heart."

The Dragon is Slain

And Siegfried asked again: "And lies it where
Doth always beat the heart of man or beast?"
Said Mime: "Yea, the dragon's heart is there,—
Now feelest thou no fear in thine own heart?"

But Siegfried joyful cried: "Swift will I thrust
My good sword Helpneed straightway to his heart.
Forsooth this deed is what you call 'to fear'?
Hey, then, old babbler, is this lesson all
That of thy craft and guile my heart can learn?
Come, get along upon thy separate way,
For naught of fear have I yet learned of thee."

Prayed Mime: "Tarry here a little while.
Thou deemest these my words but empty sound;
Wait till the dragon's self is heard and seen,
Then will thy senses swim, and leave thee faint,—
When eyes are dim and feet are faltering,
And thy heart quakes within thy shivering breast,
Then wilt thou thank him who has led thee here,
Then shalt thou know at last thy Mime's love."

Then up sprang Siegfried with hot wrath, and cried:
"Thou shalt not love me,—plainly told I thee!
Forth from the sight of me!—leave me alone!
No more shall I endure thy talk of love."

But crafty Mime: "I must leave thee now;

See, yonder near the fountain will I wait.
Abide thou here; and when the sun is high,
Look for thy foe. Daily he leaves his cave
And lolls along, passing this very spot,
To reach the fountain for his wonted draught."

Laughed Siegfried: "Mime, at the fountain wait,
And I will let him surely come to thee,
And with his drink, delighted gulp thee down;
Then my sword Helpneed both your hearts shall pierce.
Nay, heed my words,—ne'er at the fountain rest,
But take thyself away by other paths.
Only be sure to trouble me no more."

But Mime answered, seemingly most meek:
"After thy fight, if thou wouldst be refreshed,
Were I not welcome with a cooling draught?
If thou shouldst counsel need, pray call on me,
Or if, perchance, thy heart should learn to fear!"

With angry gesture, Siegfried raised himself
And drove the dwarf away, who spake aside:
"Fafner and Siegfried,—Siegfried, Fafner, both,—
Now let them fight, and each the other slay!"
He spake, and vanished in the darksome woods.

Alone stood Siegfried, and with joy he beamed;
Son of the forest, radiant in his strength,

Fearless his heart, unquenchable his hopes.
Seating himself upon a grassy sward
Beneath the linden-tree, calmly he mused:
"How full of frolic gladness is my heart
Since I have learned that Mime is no kin!
Now for the first time seems the forest fair;
And now how gladsome is the glorious day,
Since him I loathed away has hied himself,
And now offends these gazing eyes no more!"

Awhile he meditated, then he spake:
"I wonder what my father's face was like?
Ha! surely it had semblance to my own;
For if the ugly Mime had a son,
Would he not bear his very father's form?
Gruesome like him, humpbacked and cramped and crook'd,
With ugly, hanging ears, and bleary eyes?
Off with the imp! I ne'er would see him more!"

Long silence followed. Further back he leaned
Against the tree, and gazed up through the green.
The forest murmured, and his own heart spake:
"Would I might know how my dear mother looked;
But scarcely can my fondest fancies dream!
I know the tender light within her eyes
Shone ever like the soft eyes of the deer,
Yea, softer were her eyes, and fairer far!—
In pain she bore me, but why did she die?
How sad the world, if all the mothers died
When came their children lonely to the world!

Ah, dearest mother, would thy son might see
Thy face,—sweet mother, once a mortal here!"

Softly he sighed, and on the sward lay down,
Amid the silence and the murmuring sound
Of forest breezes and the song of birds.
At length, one song-bird tranced his listening ear,
Perched in the boughs above him, and he spake:
"Thou warbler, never have I heard before
Thy happy voice. Here dost thou make thy home?
Ah, could I understand thy blissful strain,
Perchance thy cadences would utter soft
Some story of my loving mother's fate?
That drivelling dwarf has often said to me
That song of birds had meaning in their strains
And men might understand. Would I might know!"

He paused in thought. Sudden he spied a clump
Of growing reeds. Impetuous came his speech:
"Ha! on these reeds I will his song essay,
And echo all his warblings to the life;
Yea, pipe the notes, although the meaning's veiled.
Perchance, as I am singing with his notes,
The hidden meaning may reveal itself."

Speaking he ran, and with his keen-edged sword
Cut off a reed, and fashioned a rude pipe.

Now, as he worked, the warbling songster paused,
And Siegfried cried: "He listens for my song."

Wherewith he played upon his reedy pipe,
As best he could, the wood-notes of the bird;
But shrill his strains, too loud or else too low.
Full many times he tried, but shook his head,
Discouraged at his music. Thus he mused:
"No bird-song that! Upon this reedy pipe
That blithesome melody may not be waked.—
Methinks, sweet warbler, I am dull indeed,
Yet not so lightly is thy sweet speech learned.
How by the shrewd wee piper am I shamed;
He peeps, and vainly listens for my song.—
Ho there! now hearken as I play my horn;
Some better notes than on the stupid reeds;
A wood-song now my lusty horn shall wind.
Listen, sweet bird, my best I blow for thee.
Long for a loving comrade have I called;
Naught better came as yet than wolf and bear.
Now let me see, as a fair note I blow,
Whom will it lure, as loving comrade mine?"

So saying, far away he flung the reed,
And lifting to his lips the silver horn,
That oft in hunting woke the echoes far,
He blew upon it a right merry blast.

Scarce had the forest echoed with the strain
Than a vast stir was heard within the leaves,
Like monster breaking through the underbrush,
And soon great Fafner with his lizard form,

Loathsome and huge, came crawling from his lair,
With yawns and growls, and writhings of his tail.

The Dragon is Slain

And Siegfried, turning at the sound, beheld
His grotesque bulk, and merrily he laughed:
"At last my lay a fair one hath allured!
What pretty comrade shalt thou be for me!"

And Fafner yawned: "What is it that I see?"
While Siegfried answered: "Hey! art thou a beast
That speaks? Then something may be learned from thee.
Here cometh one who ne'er has learned to fear;
Say, canst thou be his master in the art?"

Then Fafner sneered: "Forsooth a boaster bold."
But Siegfried challenged him: "Bold or o'erbold,—
What wist I? Thou shalt surely feel my sword
Unless forthwith thou teachest me to fear."

Half laugh, half roar, the sleepy dragon yawned.
"I wended toward the fountain for a drink,
And now, behold, this food drops in my way!"

He opened wide his jaws, his great teeth gleamed,
And Siegfried, undismayed, spoke with deep scorn:
"A broad and mighty jaw thou showest me,

Such laughing teeth within thy dainty maw!
Yet were it well to close that cavern up,
Thy gullet gapes a little bit too wide."

Snapped Fafner: "Ill it serves for senseless talk,
But well it gapes to eat up spawn like thee."

And as he spake he lashed out with his tail
A mighty lunge, whereat bold Siegfried cried:
"Oho! thou gruesome, grim, and savage brute!
No mind have I to stay thy hungry maw,
But rather feed my sword upon thy heart."

Then Fafner roared: "Bah! come, thou boastful boy!"
But Siegfried shouted, swinging fierce his sword:
"Beware! thou growler! for the boaster comes!"

Therewith defiant faced he the great brute,
Who, angered by the taunt of Siegfried's scorn,
Showed his fierce fangs, and licked his long forked tongue.
Forward the monster dragged his length, and poured
Poison and noisome vapors from his jaws,
And from his nostrils flame and deadly smoke.
Quickly leaped Siegfried to escape his wrath.
Then the great dragon lunged his tail at him,
But swiftly o'er the monster's back he sprang;
Then with his sword he slashed the brute's great tail.

Roaring with pain, and bellowing with rage,
The monster raised his great bulk for a blow,
A crushing blow of his whole ponderous weight
On Siegfried. But the hero saw his chance
As the great monster bared to him his breast,
And quickly with one blow he plunged his sword
Into the dragon's brawn. Up to the hilt
His good sword drave, and smote the monster's heart,
Wherefrom the black blood poured in torrents forth.
Still higher in his pain the great beast reared,
Then with an awful roar sank on the sword
Whose whole length gorged its way into his heart.
Leaving his blade, sprang Siegfried back and cried:
"Lie there, thou brute! my good sword loves thee well!"

The Dragon is Slain

With piteous dying voice, poor Fafner gasped:
"Who art thou, stalwart stripling, that hath struck
My very heart? Who stirred thee to this deed
Of murder? Thine own brain wrought it not out."

And Siegfried answered: "Little do I know,
Nor even who I am. But to this deed
So deadly, thou thyself didst stir my heart."

Then Fafner spake: "Thou bright-eyed lusty lad,

Who scarcely knoweth who thyself may be,
Now let me tell thee whom thou here hast slain.
The giant brothers, rulers of this world,
Fasolt and Fafner, both have fallen now.
Fasolt I dealt to death for that red gold
Which from the heavenly gods we both had won;
And Fafner now, the other of the twain,
The dragon guardian of the treasure hoard,
Falls by a stalwart hero's valiant hand.
Bear thou good heed, thou strong and fearless youth!
He who has blindly stirred thee to this deed
Is also scheming for thy speedy death.
I warn thee with my dying breath. Heed well
And mark what happens. List my warning words!"

Startled at this strange speech from the great beast,
And eager for the truth, Siegfried quick asked:
"Wise dost thou seem, weird dragon, at the last.
Perchance canst tell me who my parents were?
My name may help thee—Siegfried am I called."

"Siegfried!" cried Fafner with a wild surprise;
He sighed, and raised himself to speak, but gasped,
And fell without a word, and, silent, died.

Quoth Siegfried sad: "The dead no tidings tell.
Henceforth my living sword shall lead me on!"

And as he spake, he ran to Fafner's side
To draw his great sword from the bloody beast
That, dying, had rolled heavy on his side,
And lay a monstrous mass of slime and blood.
Then forth he drew the sword whose valiant length
Was dripping in the dragon's streaming gore.
By chance upon his hand there fell some drops,
And back he drew his hand, and fierce exclaimed:
"This blood,—it burns my flesh like sparks of fire!"

With sudden impulse, to his mouth he thrust
His blood-stained hand and tasted of the blood,
And lo! an instinct new within him woke.
Now as he listened to the woodland song
He heard with bated breath, and whispered soft:
"Methinks yon wood-bird speaks his song to me,—
His very words come clearly to my ear.
Is there a magic spell in dragons' blood?
Hark! what his throbbing throat is telling now!"

For in the branches of the linden-tree
Above him Siegfried heard the wood-bird's voice:

"HO! Siegfried doth hold
The Nibelung's gold.
In the cave doth it lie,
The great hoard piled high;

Let him win for his own the tarnhelm's crown,
And 't will serve him like banners unfurled;
Let him search like a lover the Ring in its cover,
And 't will make him the lord of the world."

Surprised and joyous, Siegfried answered him:
"Thanks, dearest warbler, for thy counsel wise.
Henceforth I gladly follow thy sweet voice."

So Siegfried looked and saw the gaping lair,
A yawning cavern, dark and thicket-lined
And slimy to the tread. Boldly he strode
Into its darkness and was lost to view.

A moment later, Mime slinking came,
And stealthy crept to Fafner's wounded side
To know beyond a doubt the beast was dead.
Yet scarcely had he come, when from a cleft
Within the rock, upon the other side,
Stepped Alberich, with glaring, anxious eyes.
Closely he watched his brother Mime there,
Who saw him not, but finding Fafner dead,
And Siegfried gone, was stealing to the cave,
When Alberich rushed at him with a cry,
And barred his way, and wrathful blurted forth:
"And whither dost thou slink, thou slippery scamp?"

Dismayed cried Mime: "Baneful brother mine,
Away with thee! What is it brings thee here?'

Fiercely spake Alberich: "Tell me, thou rogue,
Art lusting for my gold and all my wealth?"

But Mime snarled: "Avaunt, this is my place!
Long have I held it. What dost thou seek here?"

Glared Alberich, and hissed at him again:
"Ah, I have caught thee at thy slinking schemes,
Disturbed thee in thy sly and stealthy craft!"

But Mime cried: "What I have rightly won
By toil and pain shall not escape me now!"

Glaring with scorn at him, asked Alberich:
"And was it thou, forsooth, who stole the gold
From the Rhine's depths, and made the magic Ring?
Perchance 't was thou who put the mystic spell
Of wondrous power upon the circling gold?"

Then Mime made retort: "Who was it wrought
The tarnhelm which can make invisible,
And in a trice can change the form of things?
Thine was the need, but who worked out the helm?"

Sneered Alberich again: "What work couldst thou
Devise or fashion, bungler, of thyself?
My magic Ring it was that taught the craft
And fitted the dull dwarf for the great task."

But Mime mocked: "Thy Ring! where is thy Ring?
Coward, the giants robbed thee of thy Ring!
What thou hast lost, my guile shall gain for me!"

Hissed Alberich: "And will the booby now
Be bettered by the valiant stripling's deed?
The Ring is not for thee. It comes to him,
The shining hero who is now its lord!"

All eager Mime said: "I brought him up;
For all my care and pain now shall he pay.
My toil and woe have waited long their wage."

Quoth Alberich: "Just for the baby's keep
Now would this beggarly and niggard knave,
So bold and blustering, be well-nigh king!
Nay, to the scurviest hound the Ring shall go
Rather than thee! Never shalt thou, thou rogue,
Thou dullard, gain the magic golden round!"

And Mime answered in a humble strain:
"Then do thou hold and guard the shining Ring!
Be thou my lord, let me thy brother be!
Yea, for the tarnhelm, fruit of my own toil,
Take thou the gold. Then both of us are paid.
So shall we share the booty for us twain."

With mocking laugh, cried Alberich in scorn:
"Share it with thee, and give thee the tarnhelm?

How sly thou art! The magic tarnhelm thine,
How from thy schemings could I e'er sleep safe?"

Beyond himself with rage, poor Mime raved:
"Wilt thou not share, nor bargain aught with me?
Must I go bare, with no reward at all?
Not the least scrap of booty for my part?"
Fiercely spake Alberich: "Nay, not a speck!
Not e'en a nail-head lay thine hands upon!"

In fury Mime yelled: "Nor shalt thou win
The ring nor tarnhelm! now will I not share!
Against thee I will call my Siegfried forth,—
My Siegfried and his biting deadly sword.
His hand, O brother mine, shall pay thee well."

Cried Alberich: "Pray turn thy head around,
For hither from the cavern comes he now."

And Mime said: "Aye, trinkets and gold toys
He surely found, and brings from that dark cave."

Gazing intently, Alberich exclaimed:
"Behold, he has the tarnhelm in his hand."
And Mime added: "Aye, he has the Ring."

Low muttered Alberich: "Accurst!—the Ring!
How knew the wretch to clutch the magic Ring?"
Malicious Mime laughed: "Forsooth the Ring
Straightway he will deliver unto thee!—

Yet, if he does, full soon it will be mine!"
And with these words, he slipt into the woods.

But Alberich cried boldly and with warmth:
"Nay, to its lord alone shall come the Ring."
Speaking, he vanished in the rocky cleft.

Then Siegfried came in sight, returning slow
From the dead dragon's cave, and in his hands
The Ring and tarnhelm. Long he looked at them,
And pausing by the grassy knoll, he mused:
"How ye may serve me, scarcely do I know;
I snatched you from the hoard of heaped-up gold
Because a guiding voice counselled me thus.
This booty serves as witness of the fight,
And shows that I brought Fafner to his death.
Yet how to fear I have not learned one whit."

He stuck the tarnhelm in his girdle band,
And on his finger drew the magic Ring;
He paused in silence in the forest path,
He heard the rustling wind among the boughs,
And soon the bird-song lured his eager ears,
And listening with bated breath, he heard:

"HO! Siegfried doth bring
The tarnhelm and Ring;
But trust Mime not,
He hath treacherous plot!
Ho! Siegfried hath heard the dark hidden word,
And Mime doth bode him no good;

What at heart he doth mean will shortly be seen,
Thou wilt know by the taste of the blood."

The Dragon is Slain

And Siegfried showed by gestures and by mien
That he had understood the warning word.

Scarce had the bird-song ceased, when Mime came
Limping along. And Siegfried saw him come,
But gave no sign, and leaned upon his sword,
As if in thought, and Mime spake aside:
"He weighs and reckons up the booty's worth;
Came here, perchance, the Wanderer most wise,
To counsel him with cunning runes and redes?
Then doubly sly must be the dwarf's dark deeds,
And lures most cunning must be set for him,
That with my seeming true, yet traitorous words,
I may befool the trusting, guileless youth."

This to himself he spake, and forward came
To Siegfried with these smooth and cunning words:
"Be welcome, Siegfried! Now, my hero bold,
Hast thou, perchance, learned yet the way to fear?"

But Siegfried said: "No teacher here I found."

Asked Mime: "But the dragon thou hast slain,
He was a grim and foul-mouthed fiend I ween?"

And Siegfried answered: "Fierce and strong
he was,
And spiteful, yet his death doth grieve me sore
Because more evil scoundrels live unharmed!
Who made me fight I hate worse than this
brute!"

Half-open words, half-hidden, Mime spake,
For so distraught was he that scarce he knew
What he was speaking, and he blurted out
His secret thoughts that all possessed his
tongue:
"But soft! not long wilt thou upon me look;
Thine eyes with endless sleep shall soon be
closed!
What I have wanted hast thou done full well.
Now it is mine to snatch the golden prize;
Not hard to do, for always thou wert fool."

Keenly did Siegfried eye him, as he spake:
"So seekest thou to work me harm or death?"

And Mime answered: "What, so did I say?
Then, my son Siegfried, hear the words I
speak!
Thee and thy tribe I hate, have always loathed!
I nursed thee not, thou burden, from mere love,
But so I aimed to gain great Fafner's gold.
Unless most willing thou shalt waive thy claim,
Siegfried, my son, thou seest for thyself, —
Thy life must yield itself into my hands."

Cried Siegfried: "Glad I hear thou hatest me;
But must my life be forfeit unto thee?"

Still seeking to conceal his baneful thought,
Sly Mime stammering spake: "O naught of that
I said; thou hast mistaken my kind words.
See, thou art weary from thy mighty toils,
Thy body burneth in its fervent heat;
So to refresh thee with a quickening drink
Mime has careful been with loving skill.
Now sip my broth, and straightway I shall win
Thy trusty sword, and with it helm and gold."

Speaking, he chuckled. Siegfried cried amazed,
As in his broken words he saw his plot:
"So wouldst thou rob me of my sword and all
That I have won, both booty and the Ring."

Again with friendly gestures Mime spake:
"How utterly dost thou distort my words!
And is my speech, forsooth, so stammering?
Great care was mine and keenest craft I used
To trap thee often in my secret schemes;
But, stupid, thou dost read me all awry!
Open thine ears now, and awake thy wits;
Hearken what Mime means! Here, take this broth,
And drink for thy refreshment. Oft of yore
My draughts have brought thee comfort and new strength.
Though thou wert angry, sullen though thine ire,
Yet what I brought, abusing, cursing me,
Thou tookest from my hands. Take now this broth!"

Not changing face, or moving, Siegfried said:
"Yea, of a goodly draught I were most glad;
But say, of what is brewed this ugly drink?"

All eagerly cried Mime: "Ho! just drink
And trust to my old skill. In night and dark
Thy senses shall be gently lulled to rest,
And motionless and stark thy limbs shall stretch.
There as thou liest, swift I snatch the prize.
But never should I feel safe from thy reach
If ever thou shouldst wake, were the Ring mine;
So with the sword which thou hast shaped so sharp,
Off will I strike thy stupid head, my child:
Then shall I have both quiet and the Ring."

Again he chuckled. Siegfried mildly asked,
As plainly he discerned his treacherous schemes:
"And in my slumber wilt thou murder me?"

Startled, sly Mime jumped and wondering wailed,
That he had so betrayed his hidden thought:
"What meanest thou, and did I say so much?
Nay, I will only chop away the stupid head!
Had I not hated thee so sore, had not thy scoffs
And all my shames so loud for vengeance called,
Still would I fling thee surely from my path;
Else how could I e'er gain that treasure-hoard
Which Alberich doth covet, as do I?
Now then, I say, thou Volsung, cub of wolf,

SIEGFRIED AND MIME

Drink, drink, and choke to death! Drink now, I say,
And nevermore shalt thou need drink of mine!"

The Dragon is Slain

He spake, and crawling close to Siegfried's side,
He poured the poisoned draught into a horn,
And offered it with gesture of delight.
With scorn and loathing Siegfried drew his sword,
And ran him through. Mime quick gasped and fell,
And with an ugly leer breathed out his last;
While from the rocky cleft a voice was heard,
Grim Alberich, who laughed in mockery.

Gazing on Mime's body, Siegfried cried:
"Thus, loathsome babbler, dost thou taste my sword!
And thus the good sword Helpneed pays his wage
To envy. For such use I forged him well."
Seizing the body, to the cave's dark mouth
He dragged it, and with one exultant toss,
He flung it in the cavern with the words:
"Lie there within the darkness with thy hoard!
Thou strovest for it with most treacherous lures;
Now of the treasure-heap be sovereign lord!
Yea, and a trusty watch-dog shall be thine,
So that from thieves thou shalt be ever safe."

He spake and seized the dragon's massive bulk

With both his hands, and putting forth his strength,
He dragged the carcass to the cavern's mouth,
Where the huge mass ungainly filled and barred
The gaping rock. And Siegfried scornful cried:
"Lie there, thou grim and gory dragon beast!
And help yon dwarf to guard the glittering gold.
Poor silly fool, so covetous of gold,
So shall ye both now find your rest at last!"

With one look at the cave, he turned and said
(For now't was mid-day and his task was hard),
"Hot am I from my heavy toil! My blood
Doth boil, and rusheth fast. My very hands
Seem burning as I touch my fevered brow.
High stands the sun; from heaven's lustrous blue
Upon my head his glorious light shines down;
But 'neath this linden, there is shade and rest."

Speaking, he laid him down beneath the tree,
And there was perfect stillness. But anon
The forest murmured, and the song of birds
Was heard, and looking up among the boughs
Siegfried beheld the wood-bird and he spake:
"Once more, dear songster; we disturbed thee long,
But now would gladly listen to thy lay!
I see thee swaying blithely on the boughs;
Chirping and chattering with feathered kin,
Encircling thee so loving and so glad.
But I am so alone,—no kin have I,
Nor brother, nay, nor sister; mother dead
And father slain, and neither have I known.

My only comrade was a loathsome dwarf.
There was no kindness and there was no love;
He sought to trap me in his crafty lures,
Until at last I had to slay the wretch.
O friendly songster, hear the prayer I make:
Canst thou not help me find a comrade true?
Wilt thou not guide me by thy counsel wise?
Full often have I called and none has come.
But thou, my friend, must better fare, I know,
For true and wise hath always been thy word.
Now sing again,—I hearken to thy song."
A moment's silence,—then the wood-bird sang,
In words as if his mother's spirit spake
From the bird's heart, and guided him with love:

"HO! Siegfried has slain
The dread foe again!
As reward for his strife,
Waits a glorious wife;
In far forest deep, she lieth asleep,
Fire circles her round like a crown.
Who fighteth the flame, and redeemeth her shame,
Brunnhilda the fair is his own!"

With joy upstarting eager Siegfried cried:
"O lovely song! O wonder and delight!
How warm it burns within my troubled breast!
How like a flame it kindles all my heart!
What is it, sweetest friend, O sing to me!
What is it so o'ersways my thought and heart?"

Again the wood-bird sang in sweetest notes:

"YEA, all griefs above,
I sing of sweet love!
Distressed, yet my lay
I weave fair and gay,
Only heart of a friend may my song comprehend!"

All eager Siegfried cried: "I hasten forth,
Singing with rapture to the fiery heights!
Now tell me truly, dearest songster mine,
Shall I break through the barriers of fire,
And shall I waken for my own the bride?"

Joyous the wood-bird ended his fair lay:

"He only Brunnhilda shall wake
Who has never known fear, hero born without peer,
This beautiful bride shall he take!"

Then Siegfried started up with the glad boast:
"The stupid lad who never learned to fear,
That, dearest songster, surely is myself!
To-day in vain I tried with all my might
To learn it from the dragon whom I slew.
Now to Brunnhilda turns my longing heart,
Perchance from her the lesson may I learn.
How shall I find the way to yonder height?"

Scarce had he asked, when quick the wood-bird came,
And hovered round him, flitting on before;
And Siegfried cried with joy: "So lead the way!
Whither thou fliest, follows my swift foot!"

PART III: THE BRIDE IS WON

THE BRIDE IS WON

ERRIFIC storm was raging, and the night
Was wild with thunder and the lightning's glare.
Madly the forest oaks were swayed and bent
As the fierce tempest swept them in its wrath;
While from the rock cliffs of the mountain heights,
Which towered majestic, all the thunder roar
Was echoed and reëchoed thousandfold.
At length within the tumult came a lull,
And the loud rumble of the storm had ceased,
And rushing gales grew calm. But still the flash
Of lightning showed the massed and whirling clouds
Beating along the mountain's rocky cliff.

Here in this wild spot where the storm had raged,
Just at the mountain's foot, beneath the cliff,
Hemmed in by forests rough on every side,
A darksome cavern yawned amid the rocks,
And fronting it the Wanderer Wotan stood.
Silent, majestic, rose his towering form,
Clad in his flowing mantle, and his hat
Wide-brimmed and close drawn over his dark face;
Anon the lightning showed him standing there.
But soon the sombre Wanderer silence broke,
And in a dull-toned music came his speech:

"WAKEN, witch-wife!
Witch-wife, awaken!
Now be forsaken
All sleep from thy slumbering eyes!
Come to new life!
From earth's hidden cave,
From night and the grave
Where prisoned thou sleepest, arise!

"Erda! undying,
Mother all-wise,
Arise! O arise!
From hidden abysses come forth to the day!
List to my crying,
Hark to my song,
Persistent and long,
Come from silence and darkness, I pray!

"Witch-wife, awaken!
Erda all-knowing,
Destinies sowing,
Guarding the wisdom for gods and for men!
To me all forsaken,
Arise! O arise,
Erda, the wise,
Awaken, awaken, thou witch-wife, again!"

And as he sang his incantation weird,
There glowed within the cave a soft blue light,
And slowly Erda rose from nether depths.
She seemed in glittering hoar-frost shrouded close,
And her long tresses shone with mystic light,
While her great mantle, flowing to her feet,

Was shimmering with iridescent glow.
In solemn accents, low she chanted forth:
"Strong is thy song with deep and mighty spell;
And from the dream of wisdom now I wake.
Who is it dares to drive my sleep away?"

And Wotan answered: "I, the summoner;
And magic songs I sing to wake the soul,
Though sealed in bonds of slumber most profound.
Through all the world I rove and wander far,
To seek for knowledge and prophetic lore;
But none I find wiser than Erda's self.
Thou knowest what the mighty deeps conceal;
What hill and dale, and wind and tide, enfold;
Where life awakens, there thy spirit moves;
Where minds are brooding, pierceth there thy thought;
All that men say is straightway to thee known.
To win wise counsel from thy wondrous words,
Thus have I dared to waken thee from sleep."

Then in a low weird chanting Erda spake:

"SLEEPING I dream,
Dreaming I think,
Brooding for wisdom I search;
Yet while I sleep,
Waken the Norns,
Weaving their rope,
All that I ken do they weave.
Why dost thou seek not the Norns?"

But Wotan answered: "Thralled to all the world,
The dread Norns weave, nor make nor mar the fates;
To thee I come to learn to bar or break,
By greater wisdom, fate's swift-rolling wheels."

Still in a noble chant spake Erda on:

"MORTAL men's deeds
Darken my thought,
Conquering force
Wisdom subdued.
War-maiden fair
Bore I to thee,
Filling Valhalla with heroes;
Staunch is her arm,
Wise is her tongue.
Why waken me?
Seek for her aid,
Counsel from her,
Erda and Wotan's strong hope."

And Wotan spake: "Brunnhilda dost thou mean,—
The boldest Valkyr, chief of warlike maids?
'T was she who dared to flout me to my face
When most I had controlled my stormy self;
'T was she who dared to do what I had longed
Most fervently, but yet forbore to do,
Restraining the fond wishes of my heart,—
This did Brunnhilda, proud, defiant, rash,
Seek to accomplish in the battle's fire,
Altho' unbidden and against my word.

Then sternly as War-father fell my wrath,
And punished the rash maid. Upon her eyes
I laid a magic sleep. Held on the rocky heights
She slumbers fast; nor do her slumbers end
Until one wakens her and makes her bride.
What counsel therefore can I find in her?"

Silent was Erda and absorbed in thought;
At length she broke the stillness with the words:

"DAZED is my mind
Since I awoke;
Wild and most strange
Seems all the world!
Valkyr most bold,
Erda's strong child,
Lying in fetters of sleep,
While Erda, all-knowing, dreams on!
Wotan, pride's teacher,
Punishes pride!
Wotan, the doer,
Chideth the deed!
He, right's defender,
Truth's strong upholder,
Fetters the right,
Harbors untruth!
Hold me no longer in thrall,
Give me to slumber again!"

But Wotan cried: "Nay, mother, go not yet,
For I by might of magic hold thee fast.
Erda all-wise, 't was thou who planted once
Deep sorrow's sting in Wotan's dauntless heart;

Yea, thou didst break his courage by thy word,
By fear of shameful ruin and dismay.
If thou be wisest woman in the world,
Now tell me how a god may conquer fate."

Then Erda spake again in solemn voice:

"THOU canst not be
What thou hast said!
Why dost thou come,
Turbulent master,
Troubling the witch-wife's
Slumbering dreams.
O restless Wotan,
Bid me go free!
Loosen thy magical spell!"

But Wotan answered: "Erda, thou art not
What thou hast dreamed. For to an end
Draws near the mother-wisdom of the world.
At war with me, thy foresight wanes and dies.
Wist thou what Wotan wills? O thou unwise,
Loudly I cry it in thy dulling ear,
That evermore care-free thou mayst sleep on!
Hark! the eternal downfall of the gods
No more dismays me, since it works my will.
What in the fiercest anguish of my soul
Once in despair I had resolved to do,
Now glad and fearless will I bring to pass.
Yea, in mine anger had I given o'er
The world unto the Nibelung's hot greed;
Now do I will my rights and heritage
To that most valiant Volsung, Siegfried called.
He knows me not, yet is he my true choice;

Daring his spirit, yet by me untaught,
He fought and won the Nibelung's great Ring.
Free from all malice, gladdened by love's dream,
Harmless on him falls Alberich's dark curse;
For he is one who never hath known fear.
And fair Brunnhilda whom thou barest me
At length will waken at this hero's call,
And in her waking, this thy wisdom's child
A deed shall work to set the whole world free.
Hence, sink to slumber, seal thine eyelids up,
Dream dreams, and see my downfall hastening!
Whate'er may happen in the coming days,
The god yields gladly to immortal youth,
And hails the ever-young with joyous shouts!
Descend, dread Erda, mother of all fear!
Down, great world-sorrow, — sink to endless sleep, —
For yonder Siegfried, radiant Siegfried, comes!"

With drowsy eyes, dark Erda sank away,
And all was darkness in the cavern's depths.

The storm had ceased, and now the silver moon
Glints through the forest, and illumes the scene.
Wotan the Wanderer stood near the cave,
And leaned against the rocks, and waited there.

Now while he tarried in the pale moonlight
A wood-bird fluttered by him. Suddenly
It darted to and fro in wild alarm,
Then quickly in the forest disappeared.

The Bride is Won

As suddenly came Siegfried with the words:
"My songster now has vanished from my sight!
With fluttering wing and softest, sweetest song,
Blithely it led me all the leafy way,
Until this moment when it flew far off.
It meant I needs must find the rock myself;
The path my feathered friend has pointed out,
That will my feet most faithfully pursue."

He turned and followed where the bird had flown,
When Wotan in the shadow called to him:
"Whither, O stripling, dost thou bend thy way?"

And Siegfried asked: "Who is it speaks to me?
Perchance thou canst point out the way to me?
I seek a certain rock with flames engirt,
Where sleeps a maid whom I shall wake for bride."

Asked Wotan: "Who has stirred thine eager mind
To seek for fiery heights and win the bride?"

In innocence, the guileless Siegfried spake:
"It was a wood-bird, singing merrily;
It told me all, and counselled me full well."

To test him, Wotan all adroitly spake:
"A wood-bird chatters wildly in the breeze,
And none can tell the secret of the song.
How couldst thou read the melody aright?"

Frankly young Siegfried answered him, and said:
"That was the working of the dragon's blood,—
The dragon which at Hate-Cave I had slain;
Scarce had I tasted of the tingling gore,
When the sweet songs of birds I understood."

Again asked Wotan: "Who hath urged thee on
To fight the mighty dragon thou hast slain?"

Then said the lad: "'T was Mime led me on,
A treacherous dwarf, who sought to teach me fear;
But the sword-thrust that laid the dragon low,
The beast itself did seek with threatening jaws."

Still Wotan sought to have him tell his tale:
"Who forged the mighty sword, so stout and sharp,
That such a savage foe it dared and slew?"

Proudly spake Siegfried: "I did forge the sword
The smith could not. Else swordless would I be."

Eager asked Wotan: "But who made the shreds,—
The sturdy splinters,—ere the sword was forged?"

The stripling spake, "What know I of all that?
Only I know these splinters useless were

Unless the sword I welded all afresh."

Whereat old Wotan's laughter lordly rang,
Bubbling good-humor as he gayly spake:
"Well said, my boy! That must I well admit!"

But Siegfried asked: "Why dost thou jeer at me,
Thou ancient questioner? Hear once for all,
And do not keep me longer prattling here.
If thou canst point the way, tell me then quick;
But if thou canst not, hold thy wagging tongue!"

Surprised, great Wotan spake: "Softly, my boy!
If I seem old, give honor to my age."

But rudely Siegfried spake: "Honor the old!
My whole life long an old fool barred my way;
Now have I swept him from my path and life,
And if thou standest longer, stopping me,
Old one, beware lest Mime's fate be thine!"

Then nearing Wotan, close he peered, and spake:
"Scarce can I see thy face. What is thy mien?
And wherefore wearest thou that monstrous hat?
Why hangs it thus so low upon thy face?"

And Wotan answered: "So the Wanderer
Doth wear it when he fares against the wind."

Peering more closely, sudden Siegfried cried:
"I see one eye thou lackest 'neath thy hat,—
Forsooth to some one thou didst lose it late,
When thou too boldly sought to block his way.
Take thyself off, I say, or by the gods,
That other eye I quench, and quickly too!"

Yet calmly Wotan spake: "I see, my son,
The things of which thou hast no thought nor dream,
There thou dost help thyself in spite of all,
And with a single eye, such as I lack,
Thou lookest at me and my other eye."

Close listening and understanding naught,
Siegfried burst into sudden mirth, and cried:
"Thou movest me to laughter boisterous;
But come, no more I trifle with thee now.
Be quick, and point the road to yonder height,
And then, I warn thee, swiftly find thine own;
For nothing further have I need of thee.
Now speak, or I shall spurn thee from my path."

Aside spake Wotan: "O thou daring son,
If thou didst know me, thou wouldst spare that scoff!
From one so dear, such taunts are deeply felt.
Long have I loved thy race so radiant,
Though from my wrath it shrank in dire dismay.
Thou whom I hold so dear, most valiant youth,
Wake not my wrath to-day, lest in its hate
I bring quick ruin both to thee and me."

Fierce cried the youth: "And art thou still so dumb,
Thou old unmannered wight! Out of my way!
That path I know leads to the slumbering bride,
For so the wood-bird told me e'er it fled."

Sudden the darkness fell; but Wotan cried,
Outbursting into wrath, and roaring loud:
"It fled from thee to save its very life;
It knew that here the lord of ravens stood,
And woe to it whom his fierce ravens find!
The way it pointed, thou shalt never pass!"

Boldly spake Siegfried with a lightsome sneer:
"Oho! thou quick forbidder, who art thou
That doth withstand me, barring up my path?"

Spake Wotan: "Fear the guardian of the heights!
Mine is the spell engirds the slumbering maid.
Who wakes her, and who wins her for himself,
He takes my power away for evermore!
A sea of flames flows fiercely round the maid,
And fiery streams surround the rocky fell.
He who would claim the fair bride for his own
Must dare the flames of that fire-circled rock."

He spake, and with his long and shining spear
He pointed upward to the cliff, and said:
"Look to the heights! Beholdest thou the light?
The gleaming grows, the shining splendor glares,

The fire-clouds roll, the tongues of flame shoot out.
Roaring and crackling, hither do they flow;
A flood of flame is leaping round thy head,
And soon the blaze enfolds thee and consumes,—
Foolhardy boy, go back, nor seek thy death!"

And boldly Siegfried cried: "Go back thyself,
Old braggart! For I swear that where the flames
Rage fiercest, I will seek Brunnhilda there!"

Onward he moved, but Wotan barred his way,
Holding his spear against him as he spake:
"And if thou hast no fear of flame or fire,
Then must my spear be barrier to thy way.
Still wieldeth my strong hand this hallowed shaft;
Once shattered it the sword thou bearest now,
And once again 't will splinter it to shreds!"

With flashing sword outdrawn, fierce Siegfried cried:
"And have I found my father's foe at last!
Then comes an hour of glorious vengeance here!
Stretch forth thy spear! My sword shall cut it down!"

As Wotan thrust his spear to bar the way,
Out Siegfried rushed full fiercely. At one stroke
He hewed great Wotan's mighty spear in twain,
And from it flashed the lightning to the heights,

Where ever-brightening flames were leaping out.
A thunder-crash terrific filled the woods.
And Wotan called: "Fare on! I bar thee not!"
And speaking, in the heavy gloom was gone.

While Siegfried in a shout of triumph cried:
"With shattered spear my coward foe hath fled!"

And now the fiery clouds descend
From the great cliff, and roll like mists of flame
Around him. But with joyous heart he cries:
"Ha! gladdening glow and splendid glorious light!
Shining my pathway opens up to me!
Now will I bathe in fire, and through the fire
Straight will I fare to find my sleeping bride.
Oho! Oho! Right gay along I fight
To find a comrade loving, glorious!"

Winding his horn with a resounding blast,
Into the fiery sea he boldly plunged;
The forest seemed to flow with leaping flames.
Soon lost to view, yet Siegfried's horn was heard
Fainter and fainter as he climbed the heights.
Unscathed, he drove the fiery flames in front,
Unblanched, he leaped through hissing, sputtering fires.
Before his fearless eye and daring soul
The sea of flames fell back and faded out.

At length the fiery glow begins to fade,

And leaves but veiling mist, transparent, clear;
Then shortly e'en the mist has passed away,
While fairest weather comes, and clear blue sky.
Only upon the border of the rocks
There hangs a reddish veil of morning mist
Reflected from the glowing flames below.

'Twas hard and arduous climbing, but at last
Siegfried had reached the rugged mountain peak
Above the sea of flames. Amazed, he spake:
"Sweet is this haven on the sun-lit heights.
What calmly slumbers there 'neath shadowy trees?
See, 't is a war-horse rich caparisoned!"

Slowly he mounted to a further height, and paused,
For there beneath a fir-tree, spreading wide,
He saw a figure lying, warrior-like,
Complete in shining armor; helmet bright
Upon the head, and a broad shield embossed
That covered all the body in defence.

And in a new amazement Siegfried cried:
"What splendor shines upon me with its rays!
What glittering suit of steel do I behold!
Is it the dazzling fire that blinds mine eyes?
What wondrous armor! Shall I raise it up?"

Nearer he drew, and lifted up the shield,
Altho' the face was by the helmet hid;
And Siegfried, all admiring, quick exclaimed:

"Behold a man in armor full encased!
How gladly do I see his stalwart form!
His helmet presses close his haughty head;
Lighter, if it were loosed, would be his rest."

With eager care the helmet he unloosed,
And from the sleeper's head he lifted it;
Then forth there fell the long and curling hair,
A mass of tresses, stream of waving gold,
And Siegfried, all amazement, murmured soft:
"Ah, see, how fair and beautiful it is!
Behold the golden clouds that lightly fringe
The crystal azure of the heavenly skies!
Behold the radiant sun whose smiling face
Shines through the cluster of the fleecy clouds!"

Low bending o'er the sleeper, soft he spake:
"With labor of hard breathing heaves his breast:
The trammels of the tunic should be loosed."

Cautious he tried the breastplate strong to loose,
But all in vain. Then drawing sword, he spake:
"Come, my good sword, cut through this cumbrous steel."

With gentle carefulness he cut the rings
On each side of the breastplate; tenderly
The corselet lifted and the greaves, and lo!
Brunnhilda lay before him, sleeping fair,
And beautiful in her soft woman's gown.
Astounded by the sight and smitten deep
By her most heavenly beauty, Siegfried cried:

"No man is this! See, 't is my destined bride!
Burning enchantment pierces to my heart;
A fiery spell doth blind and dazzle me;
My senses stagger and my soul doth faint!
Whom shall I call to aid me in this hour,
When some strong spell o'ercomes me with its power?
Dear mother, best beloved, remember me,
And help me in my fateful time of need."

The Bride is Won

All tense with feeling, overwhelmed by love,
He sank as if a billow o'er him rolled,
And almost fainting lay upon the ground,
His drooping head on fair Brunnhilda's breast.
Long was he silent, thralled with secret spell,
Then suddenly he started up, and cried:
"How shall I wake this fair and sleeping maid
That she may open her bright eyes to me?
Her opened eyes!—would they not blind my sight?
How could I dare to face their splendid fires?
Now all things waver and in strangeness sway;
In bitter longing doth my spirit waste;
My hand is trembling on my craven heart!
What is this feeling,—is it fear, forsooth?—
Mother beloved, behold thy stalwart son,
So valiant that a gentle, sleeping maid
At last has taught his trembling hand to fear!
How can I end this fear? how nerve my soul?
To rouse my strength, I must this maid awake!
Yea, 't is a flower, her blossoming sweet mouth;
I gaze and gentle tremors stir me through.

And O! how warm and winsome is her breath!—
Waken! awaken! fair and holy bride!—
She hears me not. See, from her dainty lips,
Life will I sip, though for the deed I die."

And sinking low in rapturous swoon of love,
Closing his eyes, he laid his lips on hers,
And at the kiss there passed an ardent thrill,
Gift of new life for each. He started up
With gladness in his heart, and looked at her,
While slow she opened both her glorious eyes
And gazed upon him,—'t was the opening heavens;
And slowly coming back to consciousness,
She raised herself, and wondrous smiling spake:
"All hail to thee, thou glorious sun in heaven!
All hail to thee, thou lustrous shining light!
All hail to thee, thou sweet and smiling day!
Long, long my slumber, but at last I wake.
What hero is it calls me back to life?"

Entranced by her great beauty and soft voice,
Siegfried stood rooted to the spot, yet spake:
"Through fires that flamed around the fell I broke,
'T was I unclasped the helmet from thy head;
'T is Siegfried who has kissed and wakened thee!"

Further she raised herself, and glowing cried:
"All hail to you, ye gods! All hail, thou world!
All hail, ye glories of the teeming earth!

Full ended is my sleep; awake my life.
'T is Siegfried who has burst my slumber bonds!"

And Siegfried cried in highest ecstasy:
"O mother, hail! who gave to me my life!
And hail, O earth, my nourisher and nurse!
That I should live to see these glorious orbs
Whose radiant light is smiling in my heart!"

Brunnhilda, deeply stirred, again broke forth:
"Yea, mother, hail! who gave to thee thy life!
And hail, blest earth, thy nourisher and nurse!
Fated thine eyes were to behold my face;
Fated was I to wake for thee alone.

"O SIEGFRIED! Siegfried!
Hero of might!
Strong waker of life,
Thou conquering light!
Know, O my heart, thou joy of all time,
That thou art the hope of my freedom sublime!

"O Siegfried! Siegfried!
Most precious to me!
Before thou wert formed
Close fostered I thee!
My shield was thy guard before thou wert born;
I have known thee and loved thee from life's early morn."

Softly, with reverence, then Siegfried asked:
"And my dear mother—did she never die?
And is the sweet one somewhere bound in sleep?"

Brunnhilda smiled, and stretching out her hands
In gracious kindness to him, soft she said:
"Thou child most innocent, thy mother dear
Will never greet thee more. But I will be
Thy second self, if thou wilt love me true,
And what thou knowest not, that can I teach;
For I grow wise because I love thee so.

"O SIEGFRIED! Siegfried!
Conquering light!
Ever I loved thee!
Keen was my sight
Of the deep-hidden thoughts in the great Wotan's heart,
And forever the goal of his fond hopes thou art.

"Shrinking in awe,
Not a word I confessed
Of all the new light
That glowed in my breast;
For this I have fought and suffered and strove,
For this do I strive with the god whom I love.

"Full long in a penance
And prison of sleep,
On this crag have I lain
In punishment deep;
Now may thy coming my fair guerdon prove,
Be thou Wotan's joy as thou art my own love."

And Siegfried, full of gladness, low replied:
"How welcome sounds thy glad and glowing song!

BRUNHILDE IS AWAKENED BY SIEGFRIED

But hid to me is all its secret thought.
I see thy lustrous eyes that shine so fair,
I feel thy fragrant breath in winsome warmth,
I hear the soothing of thy voice in song;
Yet what the message of thy melody
Is all unknown unto my wandering mind.
Naught can I grasp of far-off olden tales,
For all my senses see and feel but thee.
In bonds of trembling fear my spirit cowers,
The fear that I have learned from thee alone.
Thou who with mighty bonds hast made me fast,
O bring my strength and courage back to me!"

Brunnhilda answered not the eager youth,
But looked beyond him to the woods and spake:
"I see my faithful steed, my Grani there!
So long he slept, but now he gladly feasts
Upon the green. Did Siegfried wake us both?"

But Siegfried murmured, all unanswering:
"On glorious lips my glances gladly feast,
With burning thirst my own lips are aflame
Until they taste what my fond eyes behold!"

Brunnhilda, pointing to her weapons, cried:
"I see the shield that sheltered heroes oft,
I see the helmet that adorned my brow;
Yet shall they shield and cover me no more."

Yet all unheeding, Siegfried eager cried:
"A maid divine has vanquished my strong heart;
By mortal hurts my brow is wounded sore,
For without shield or helmet have I come!"

With growing sadness, fair Brunnhilda mourned:
"There do I see my corslet's glittering steel;
A keen-edged sword has severed it in twain,
And from the maiden's limbs it loosed the greaves.
I am sans guard or glaive, or sword or shield,
Naught but a helpless woman do I feel!"

But Siegfried all impetuously cried:
"Through fiery billows have I fared to thee,
Nor shield nor corselet guarded my strong breast.
Into my heart the leaping flames have burst;
My blood is bounding in tumultuous streams;
A rapturous fire is raging all within.
The flames that once around Brunnhilda roared
Now leap and rage within this loving breast.
O beauteous maid, now quench this furious fire!
Still thou these leaping flames of love divine!"

Eager he grasped her in his longing arms,
But up she sprang and with a sudden fear,
An awful thrill of terror in her soul,
She rushed away, with wild and anguished words:
"No god has dared to touch me. Goddess I
And maiden ever, hero-reverenced,
Holy and virgin from Valhalla come!
O woe is me! My glory must I lose!
My hero came to deal my life this wound!
Away he takes my corselet and my helm,
And I shall be Brunnhilda nevermore!"

With saddened accents, Siegfried answered her:
"Thou seemest still the mystic maid asleep;
The bonds of slumber still enthrall thy mind.
Brunnhilda, wake! and be my loving bride!"

Perplexed and troubled, fair Brunnhilda cried:
"My senses sway and all my reason wanes.
Must all my wisdom vanish from my soul?"

But Siegfried comforted: "Didst thou not sing
Thy wisdom was the light of love for me?"

Brunnhilda wailed: "Darkness obscure and sad
Dazes my sight, and blinded are mine eyes,
For all their light is gone. Night wraps me round,—
From gloomy shadows rises a grim fear,
And grisly horrors compass me with dread."

She spake, and clasped her hands across her eyes,
But Siegfried drew them off, and softly said:
"The night doth frighten eyes fast-closed in fear;
But set them free, and gloomy fears are fled.
Mount through the darkness, and behold the light,—
Above the clouds, shineth the sun-bright day!"

And with a strength and sweetness all divine,
Stirred to the depths, Brunnhilda trembling cried:

"O SIEGFRIED! Siegfried!
Bright as the sun
Shineth this day
When my freedom is won;
Deathless I was, and am, and shall be,
Shall I be mortal in the blessing of thee?

"O Siegfried, glorious
Hope of the world,
Lordliest hero,
With banners unfurled,
Leave me in peace! flame forth like the light!
Master me not with thy conquering might!

"O Siegfried, exultant!
Thy face thou hast seen
In the brook's limpid mirror
Defiant, serene;
Thou hast thine own life, its currents keep pure,
Sully not with my shame, though its love doth allure.

"O Siegfried! Siegfried!
Light of my soul,
Lose not thyself
In a thrice-cursèd goal!
Turn thou from me! forget that I live;
And to conquest and glory thy mighty strength give!"

But Siegfried cried in earnestness sublime:
"I love thee, yea, I love thee,—love but thee!
If only thou couldst say, 'Thee do I love'!
Mine I am now no more! O wert thou mine!

A glorious flood of love before me rolls,
And in its billows I behold but thee.
Its depths reveal my face no more, but thine;
Burning I long to find the flood's dark depths;
Now, as I am, I plunge into the waves.
O let the flood engulf me in its bliss,
And quench my fever in its tides of love!
Awake, Brunnhilda! wake, my loving bride!
Awake to laughter and supremest bliss!
Be mine, beloved! O be mine, true heart!"

With smiling, radiant face, Brunnhilda spake:
"O Siegfried, thine I was long years ago."

And Siegfried cried: "What thou hast been of yore,
So be thou now and evermore to me!"
And with a cry of joy Brunnhilda said:
"Yea, thine I am to-day and evermore!"

And all afire with love, Siegfried cried out,
As to his heart he clasped her tenderly:
"What thou wilt be forever, be to-day!
Close in my arms I fold thee like a god;
Close to my breast I feel thy beating heart;
Mine eyes look deep into thy loving eyes,
And breath meets breath in whisperings of love.
Yea, eye to eye, I see thee,—thou art mine!
Yea, lip to lip I greet thee,—thou art mine!
Past, future, glorious present, thou art mine!
How quickly fades the shadow of thy fear,
If thou, Brunnhilda, knowest thou art mine!"

Aglow, Brunnhilda cried in wild delight:

"IF I be thine,
Siegfried! Siegfried!
In tempest is plunged
My god-like repose;
The white light of love
Flames red like the rose;
The heavenly wisdom
Flieth astray,—
The fierce gust of madness
Whirls it away.

"If I be thine,
Siegfried! Siegfried!
Mine eyes shall devour thee;
O how they yearn!
Mine arms close enfold thee;
Dost thou not burn?
My blood is a stream
Of fierce, raging fire;
O dost thou not tremble
With maddest desire?"

Still clasping her in passionate embrace,
Siegfried cried out in tumult of wild joy:
"Ha! how my blood is kindled into flame!
How on thy beauty feed my eager eyes!
Now in my arms with joy I thee enfold;
Now cometh back my dauntless heart and strength,
And O, the fear that never had I known,
Which even thou couldst hardly teach to me,
That fear, methinks, hath faded like a dream."

And strangely doubting as he spake the words,

Unconsciously he opened his great arms
And loosed Brunnhilda from his strong embrace,
But she with joyous laughter wildly cried:

"SIEGFRIED! Siegfried!
Child of delight,
Glorious hero
Of lordliest might,
Laughing I love thee with each glowing breath!
Laughing with thee will I go down to death!

"Farewell, Valhalla,
Light-giving world,
Now be thy towers
To swift ruin hurled!
Farewell, pomp of gods! Farewell, heavenly host!
Rend your runes, dreaded Norns, for Valhalla is lost.

"Haste, dusk of the gods,
Rise with your gloom!
Night of the downfall,
Haste with black doom!
Siegfried, my star, my life, and my breath!
My Love that illumines, yea, laugheth at death!"

Again fond Siegfried clasped her to his heart,
As if forever there to hold her fast,
And in a glowing triumph for all time
And for eternity, he joyous cried:
"Laughing, thou wakest gladness in my soul;

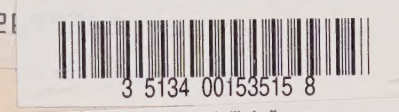
Brunnhilda lives, and I live in her smile!
Hail to the sun that giveth his bright gleams!
Hail to the day with wondrous glory full!
Hail to the light that conquers night's sad gloom!
Hail to the world which fair Brunnhilda wakes!
She wakes, she lives, and greets me with her smile!
In splendor shines Brunnhilda, my life's star;
She is my very own, forever mine!
And she alone, my all, my wealth, my world,
Light of all love, yea, love that laughs at death!"

THE END

DATE DUE

#47-0108 Peel Off Pressure Sensitive

A00003021



ML 50 .W14 R62 1910
Wagner, Richard, 1813-188
Siegfried

GENERAL LOAN COLLECTION
OREGON STATE LIBRARY
STEM

RULES GOVERNING MAIL ORDER LOANS

Books loaned through local or traveling libraries are subject to the rules governing them.

No charge for books.—The books circulated by the State Library are free to all citizens of Oregon who will agree to observe the rules of the library and pay transportation charges both ways on books loaned. Shipment is made by mail or express and all prepaid charges must be remitted upon receipt or return of package. Acknowledgment of receipt is requested.

Borrowers.—Adults not previously registered as borrowers should apply through librarian of local public or traveling library, school officers or principal, county school superintendents, members of the Legislature, officers of the local grange or other permanent organization, or give reference to some state officer located in Salem. Must obtain signature of local librarian or school principal.

Number of Volumes.—A reasonable request for books will be granted if applicant wishes them for study or research work, and books are not needed elsewhere. Loan of fiction will be limited to two volumes at one time.

Time Kept.—Books must be received by the State Library within 21 days from date of loan. They may be renewed for two weeks upon request as long as needed for study, unless reserved for other borrowers. Date upon which books will be due in the library is given on notice of shipment. Some books will be issued for a shorter period and may not be renewed.

Groups of books for clubs and libraries are loaned for longer periods.

Fines.—A fine of two cents a day must be paid for books kept, without renewal, beyond period for which loan is made. No books will be loaned to anyone who has failed to meet the obligations of borrowers as given in these rules. Notice will be sent when books are five days overdue without having been returned.

Lost and Injured Books.—Borrowers are held responsible for books and are required to pay for lost and injured volumes. Number of books loaned is given on notification postal and borrowers are held responsible for this number unless notice of shortage or error is sent immediately upon receipt of package.

Books must be kept clean, must not be marked and corners of leaves must not be turned down.